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BETTER WAY[®]
CHARLES WAGNER

Author of *The Simple Life*

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THE BETTER WAY

THE BETTER WAY

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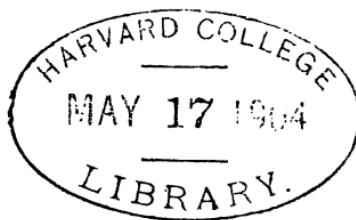
By CHARLES WAGNER
Author of The Simple Life

Translated from the French by Mary Louise Hendee



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DEDICATION

To
Pierre Wagner
Paris, February 24, 1884
Montana-sur-Sierre, August 20, 1899

MY child, I began this book by your bed of pain and in my lonely walks on the mountain.

Many a time I interrupted the writing to go and do for you one of those innumerable little services at once so sad and so sweet; and away from you, in the Alpine pathways, in the high pastures and solitary midlands, my aching heart was filled with your image.

To you then I dedicate these pages. May they be offered you not as sad tokens of what no longer is, but as an eternal pledge between our inseparable souls, and as an act of homage, that I would were purer and fuller of consolation, rendered from the midst of a transitory world to that which never dies.

PREFACE

PREFACE

I HAVE known solitude, but never abandonment. However remote my way, there has always come to fare with me an unknown companion, of unfailing goodness. He has been strong in the stress of life, tender in pain, paternally severe in the hours of carelessness.

Never have I fought a battle that he was not by my side. Into all life we have gone together; we were two who spoke in public, two who took counsel by the fireside. I have come to know him as another self, a good genius, a near and superior spirit who untangles from the perplexities of life that which is sure and essential.

He has shared my joy in bright days, and in dark ones he has cheered me. Wandering perplexed in the wilderness of ideas or of passions I would see him appear suddenly in the very heart of the labyrinth, and his glance opened the way.

In the hours of youth and expansion, when one

sings and vibrates like a harp, he sang loudest of all. When the hours came in which one cannot speak to grief, silent he wept with me.

Who this mysterious Friend is I do not know. I claim for him neither prestige nor any privilege of infallibility. My purpose is simply to let my fellows profit by what he has brought me.

It is not hard to perceive that he borrows almost everywhere the light he throws along my path, for his face radiates universal human sympathy. For myself, I venerate him as a Knight of God. Certainly he has seen far distant times, but he is infused with the vigorous current of life that stirs under the bark of ancient oaks. He has been in all good fights; his heart bears the scars of all blows at truth and justice. Along Sinai and Judea he has listened to the Prophets, and he has prayed on Calvary; but he also loves the good Homer, Plato, and all things largely human. He has a decided bent for scientific research and social questions; he interests himself passionately in those who follow unbeaten paths over the vast stretches of the unknown. But, when they would deny the Spirit, he laughs in his long beard. Stifling in confinement, he seeks equilibrium and

wide horizons. He abhors the sectarian spirit, and openly declares that if the chiefs should return by whom men swear and anathematize, not one of them would be of his own creed.

What distinguishes him above all else is Faith.

He believes in the profitable flight of days, in the high destiny which, without knowing how to name or define it, suffering and militant humanity pursues across its laborious career. He believes in the mystery that opens in a flower, shines from the stars, pierces the conscience, sobs in our tears, vibrates in our songs, sleeps in the cradle, and hides in the grave. He believes in the Spirit beyond measure, in the ultimate downfall of evil, in the triumph of love, in expiation for sin; he believes in heaven, but he believes also in earth; he believes in man, because he believes ardently in God, not alone the God of splendid creations, of transcendent power, of unapproachable light, but the God who works in human guise, trembles in our hope, suffers from our griefs; a God who has chosen like a device this magnificent cry of Terence's—"I am man, and nothing human is alien to me." Surely the best that the Friend possesses comes to him from the Son of Man.

Alas! I despair of ever characterizing the spirit that inspires him, but I must needs force myself, under pain of treachery, to stammer after him some of the things he has said to me. If these fragmentary and disconnected pages may contain here and there bits of true life, crumbs of the nourishing bread on which the soul feeds; if someone shall owe it to them that he is less high for the lowly, less the creature of his own narrow affirmations and negations, less self-sufficient and less faint-hearted, less sad in his mourning, happier in his work for the future, and more confident during our blind and painful seed-times, it will be precious fruit of a labor that already in itself has brought so much consolation.

La Commanderie, July 25, 1902.

Saint Christopher's Day.

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SOUVENIRS

SOUVENIRS

I THINK OF THEE

DEAR child, I speak to thee from the heart of a perishable world; thou dost listen from a world where there is no more death. In God we are near each other. It is three years since we and you were living alone in the mountains, three years since, after five months of suffering, you fell asleep one evening in our arms. Only God knows what your poor mother has suffered since then.

I wish thought of you to be attached always to this book, begun during your illness, and dedicated to you. Perhaps it will carry a bit of brotherly sympathy and moral support to others whom sorrow puts to the proof.

O my son! the years roll by, and each one makes you dearer and more real to our hearts. Your name is ever on our lips, your dear image mingles in all our life. Your little brother and your sisters go to sleep at night naming you

in their prayers. Your little room, full of the things that belonged to you, is always garnished with flowers. The first violets from the garden and the last chrysanthemums are offered you, with an affection as simple and as trustful as though you were visible to our eyes.

Love is stronger than death.

May our souls remain faithful and confident, that courage may never forsake them.

May God give us the grace to weep for you with hope.

MY SON!

1884

AFTER the first emotions aroused by your birth were stilled, the new fact of having a son which had slowly found place in my mind, began little by little to pervade my whole inner life and to mingle with all the events stored up in my memory.

The great event, then, had taken place. To the farthest recesses of my being—unknown and mysterious, like the heart of a wood where no chance-comer ever strays—a strange light shed

over everything, showed that the news had passed that way.

At length we possessed him, this dear expected. The long months of his mother's patient seclusion, the sacrifice of movement and liberty, the doubts, the dejection, the solitude, the fear, were all forgotten. In the front rank of thought, in the full radiance of happiness, the event stood forth with a triumphant intensity.

I attributed the merit of our happiness to the entire universe. I sent measureless gratitude upward to God. I took it kindly of the passers-by that I had a son. And suddenly I loved them all better than before, young and old, happy and miserable, whosoever went my way in the street. Why did they not seem to remark something extraordinary in my heart and face?—Reserve, no doubt, and friendly discretion.

And, as I strode about this great Paris in all directions, every man I met seemed a brave fellow. More than once, perched on top of some omnibus, I felt myself carried along by the strong swing of the horses as though across a dream.

Those who have not travelled this road will never understand anything about it. Words can

make those who feel what we feel understand us, but they cannot create what does not exist. Shall I regret the intoxication of that time, now that joy, hope, and the sweet emotions of the heart have been followed by so much grief? No, I regret nothing. For nothing in the world could I wish that this past had not been.

WHAT a new outlook is opened upon the world by this title of father! A man draws nearer to his ancestors when he himself has a son, and he takes hold on humanity by a thousand new and sensitive tendrils, capable of revealing to him the secret of joys and sorrows of which hitherto he has had no suspicion.

BLESSINGS on the hours of tenderness that I have consecrated to thee! If I had charged others to love thee in my place, a pure treasure would be wanting in my memory. To carry one's children one's self, even in the street; to play with them, tell them stories, give them personal care, watch their development —from every point of view, it is a good thing.

The nation as well as the family depend upon this—that fathers be really fathers.

But when we lose them, these dearly beloved ones, it is a comfort to have enjoyed them well. Love well while we may, profit from the hours of grace, when our darlings are with us. The time may come when they will be far off. Then from these souvenirs the thirsting heart draws refreshment as the flower does from a dewdrop.

BEYOND THE WALL

WE were in Switzerland, where we had arrived in the morning. I had charge of Pierre, who was just entering his third year. He was trotting about near me, examining everything and asking questions. Suddenly, without my knowing how, the child disappeared.

Near at hand were rocks, precipices, all sorts of dangers. I ran in search, I accosted everybody. No one had seen him. A madness of terror seized me.

Then, going along a high garden-wall, I heard

from the other side a child's voice in conversation with the deep voice of a man.

It was Pierre; they were offering him strawberries and asking about his father and mother. He, all unconcerned, was eating the fruit, and, encouraged by his welcome, was prattling away, quite at home.

NOW the wall between him and us is of another height. But the scene of childhood comes back to me, when I believed him lost, fallen into some abyss, while in truth he was happy, welcome, cared for; and I see in it a symbol of what is passing on the other side of the wall.

MY SON!

1899.

THE FRIEND:

LOOK about this secluded mountain recess. It is only a few weeks since the snow vanished. Now all the flowers of springtime have burst their buds:—blue gentians, yellow primroses, pink hare-bells nodding

in cascades and outspread in carpets; painted anemones and the dwarf lilies graceful as a child. As a foundation for all this, see the greensward whose grass grows fine and small, as if to leave the glory to the flowers. All around hang gray rocks overgrown with old bearded pines, and overhead the sky seems cut from a single sapphire. . . .

What! . . . You weep?

—My son!

—THE FRIEND: Poor father!

Nature is waking to her new birth. His youth is blighted. Is not his brow pure, his soul white as the lilies? Candor smiles in his starry eyes; he is good, he has known no evil; and the enemy blasts him. Oh! this paleness and then this fever glow, this young life withering under a breath of fire, this cough that racks and tears!

I can no longer think of other things. The songs of the birds, the smiling sun, the sight of the flowers rend my soul. An invisible hand has tightened round my heart; I wander over the mountain like a somnambulist; I look at the forest, and do not see it; I listen to the torrent, and do not hear it. I am not here, but down there

beside his bed of suffering. O my child! my poor child!

—THE FRIEND: *I weep with your tears. He merits love, and plaint, and regret, the dear boy! Fifteen years and a half! A companion already, a friend for his mother, a beautiful hope of the future. To see him sapped at the root—what torture for you!*

And yet, if you love him well, should you not master yourself? Have you not need of being twice a man? Have you thought of the choice offered you in these grave moments—either to let your grief make inroads and vanquish you, and so become for those belonging to you, for your son himself, a source of suffering, an additional burden; or to be brave and virile, to stand firm, and become for the others and for this dear little one who suffers, a sure refuge, a good and calm hiding-place always near?

It is not right to let grief have this mastery, and set its signs on your brow. What will your face say to your son? Will he read from it a story of despair? You owe him something better than this. Do not you add to his misfortunes, but protect him against them. Do not look at him

with eyes which say that he is lost. No one is ever lost. We are God's; that is unchanging. You must reinvigorate the spirit of your son by strengthening your own; let him feel himself protected, supported, guarded, in perfect security.

Consider this illness, in spite of its evident gravity, as a circumstance, not as the principal thing. Treat the child like an ordinary child who is interested in everything, and who shares in life like the rest. Do not keep bringing his attention back to the point of defect. We do not make what is unstable the centre of all the rest, but we strive to attach all manifestations of our life, happy and unhappy, to that which alone remains firm. Acting otherwise we become enemies and oppressors of those we love best; we make ourselves incapable even of caring for them physically. . . .

Your son loves flowers. If he could but see this splendor round about us, a smile would light his face; he would have a moment of pleasure, of forgetfulness of pain. The spirit that sustains and saves us in our distresses would speak to him in the soft breath stirring on these heights.

Since he cannot come here, the flowers must go

to him. Let us fill our arms with them, and, if possible, offer them to him with a smile. To those whom we love we should not give shadow, but light. To carry them real comfort and relief in their pain and weakness, we must love them with faith, with confidence; love them with a steadfast will to rescue them in spite of everything.

PORTRAIT

THY great blue eyes of infinite sweetness seemed to look upon the beyond oftener than upon the present, and, even when a little child, thy questions and ideas showed a singular openness toward the spiritual world.

Why wert thou never quite reconciled to thy part of boy? Thy altogether feminine grace accorded ill with rough sports. When alone, thou didst seek more quiet pleasures. Perhaps thou hadst unconsciously the presentiment of thy premature death, and felt thyself set apart for other destinies.

Thou didst not make thy pact with the earth. It seemed as if thou hadst known that it was but an inn by the way, and not thy habitation. Its

dust and its defilement remained unseen by thee. At the age when others lose the bloom of their ingenuousness, and take pleasure in rude actions and ungentle speech, thou didst become more open still, with more of conscience.

Ill-sounding words slipped thy memory; nothing impure was fixed there. Thy candor increased with the years, and, having attained almost the stature of a man, thou didst preserve without constraint or effort the white innocence of a child. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Thy youth was like the fragrance of these words.

To be ill-tempered, angry, domineering—all that was unknown to thee. Thou didst simply turn toward the good. Every harsh judgment upon others, every exchange of heated speech, was hateful to thee. Thou hadst natural justice and innate charity. That each show consideration for others, and that no injustice be committed or suffered—this was thy heartfelt wish.

And thy unfailing tact and fine taste made thee a companion full of charm and good counsel, one who breathed peace and communicated it. With thy little sisters and thy brother thou didst enjoy

undisputed the rights of an elder, founded on the simple magic of perfect kindness.

For thy mother already thou wert becoming a companion, a resource, a confidant. Discreet and docile, like a respectful son, thy opinion was consulted like that of a big brother.

And I, charged with the weight of a formidable ministry, saw thee growing up clear-sighted, peace-loving, spiritually-minded, a future companion in arms, a disciple to dream of.

From this choice soul, open to beauty, sensitive to grace, vibrating in answer to everything noble and pure, I saw the eternal Gospel reflected in new lights; and already, outstripping time with the cherished hope, the father heard the son proclaim the message of love, and spread the good news welcome to wounded hearts.

Oh, how we loved thee!

UNFORESEEN, as a bolt falls from the blue sky, the evil was upon thee. In a few days we had to break the family circle and set out for the mountains to seek an ally against the enemy.

We were vanquished. But you never murmured

or made complaint. Where, pray, had you learned patience, the hard art of suffering, serenity in distress, and simplicity in the face of death? God alone knows.

TO feel that thou art in His hands, as the living are too, this is our final refuge in our grief. God guard us in it, increase our trust for the days to come, and preserve it to our last hour!

Dear lad, gone before thy time from our arms where thou wast and art so beloved, thy empty place will cause us many tears. But how sweet thy face was in death, how patiently thou didst suffer, how thy brave smile and thy caresses lighted up those dark hours! Thou hast sown with rays of white light the pathway to the grave, and left at the gates of death a gleam as of the dawn. God give us to remember thee when we must suffer and pass on!

THE BETTER WAY

I ASK *only to be like thee, as simply resigned,*
as trustful, as natural. Thou hast not lived
for nothing, my dear little Pierre. Thou
wilt remain living and active among us till the day
when we find one another again in the invisible
world of which all visible form is but the far-off
symbol.

SOLITUDES AND RESTING- PLACES

I ASK *only to be like thee, as simply resigned, as trustful, as natural.* Thou hast not lived for nothing, my dear little Pierre. Thou wilt remain living and active among us till the day when we find one another again in the invisible world of which all visible form is but the far-off symbol.

SOLITUDES AND RESTING- PLACES

*O Tag, wenn deine Farben blassen,
Und wenn erlosch dein bunter Schein,
Dann kann sich erst die Seele fassen,
Der Geist kehrt in sich selber ein !
Wenn Stille sinkt auf Wald und Triften,
Und Schatten ruht auf Stadt und Feld,
Dann hört der Mensch aus dunklen Lüften
Die Stimmen einer andren Welt.*

Gerok (Palmblätter).

*O day, when first thy colors fail,
And when thy garish light grows pale,
The soul knows self within the breast,
The spirit is its own true guest !
When stillness sinks on wood and meadow,
And town and field lie dusk in shadow,
Man hears from out the darkling air
The voices of a world elsewhere.*

SOLITUDES AND RESTING- PLACES

SIT THOU SILENT

THE future seems afar off. We toil toward it with slow, painful steps; our task is heavy, our means pitifully small, and there are hours in our lives when utter weariness overwhelms us.

—THE FRIEND: At such times you must stop and take heart. When you have passed the point of freshness and enthusiasm, even in a cause to which your life is consecrated, do not go doggedly ahead, or you will do inefficient work that will discourage you and hurt the cause. Call a halt and look for relief.

You should have for retreat some quiet place you love, where your aims are understood, where you find solace from the rude shocks of life, from men's scorn and their evil-speaking. Sit down again at that fireside of friendship which gives grateful warmth to the spirit. Let the wholesome sunlight shine upon your soul and the dew fall

on it and refresh it. Quit for a time the consuming crowd, that when you return you may be able to cope with it again, full of new vigor. Leave those who criticise you on the threshold of the retreat that gives you peace and welcome.

O Bethany! O Tabor! O holy nights in the mountain! O sweet reunion with those whose hearts beat in unison with our own! We need you as the child its mother's breast, the wayfarer shelter for the night, the exile sight of his fatherland!

O selige Oed' auf sonniger Höh!

IN THE DESERT

THE FRIEND: It is all wrong to think that by fleeing the world you can find freedom. Salvation never lies in flight. It lies in the fierce and noble strife, in that gift of self which is the very leaven of life. And yet of what use is a bow that has been so long bent as to lose all its supple strength, or yeast whose power is exhausted?

Three-fourths of our work is done within us. The fundamental condition of every effective act is that we should get a firm grasp on its ideal

aspects and prepare to perform it with a full faith. Every worker in the world ought therefore to habituate himself to sojourns in the desert, to which he should return ever and again to seek inspiration, to renew his armor, to listen to the voice of silence, and to let the waves aroused by the storm of strife roll unfelt across the quiet deeps of the world within.

NARROWED HORIZONS

THERE are days when the infinities and immensities of the universe mean nothing to us. Then the whole landscape recedes and is obscured in an impenetrable mist, and the spirit seems less able than at other times to see things in their larger relation.

—**THE FRIEND:** On such days, if you would have contact again with the more permanent realities of life, go sit down by some mossy path or among the roots of a tree and watch the ants running hither and thither among the tiny blades of grass. The dewdrop that trembles on the toothed leaf of the strawberry vine is akin to Sirius sparkling on the fringe of heaven. God is so great that

we find Him on every level; His voice often rises from the dust.

If we cannot send a message by overhead wires we use those underground. If both fail us, we still have wireless telegraphy. The breaking of a cable now is far from being an irremediable disaster.

SPIRITUAL DEARTH

MY soul is as arid as the steppe. I am no longer conscious of anything astir or alive within it. A kind of winter seems to have come over it, a sombre, frozen winter, which holds everything benumbed in its grip.
—**THE FRIEND:** The soul, like the earth, has its seasons. This is natural, and you should not so much ponder the fact itself as try to adjust yourself to meet it. Make hay while the sun shines, and lay in your store against this winter of the soul. There is a time to sow, a time to reap, and still another to get you into winter quarters and live on the harvest of the fruitful days. When every bush blossoms with sweet-brier, who would suspect that a single rose could give such pleasure in the heart of winter?

Bind then the sheaves, cull souvenirs of summer from every wayside, and make the most of that happy time when the mind bears its fruit, when life is lived to some avail, when portals seem to open on the supernal mysteries. The hour of famine will arrive, the hour of drought, when you will no longer prosper and all your affairs will be at a standstill. If you await that hour for laying in your store, you will be like the fool who, lacking bread, puts plough to frost-bound soil. When we have once established a connection between ourselves and the sources of our life, every hour is an hour of plenty. Let us profit by these hours, that we may not come to want when the source is barred against us.

Experience undergone in times of hardship may save you from satiety in success; and good hours of repose, of expansion, of free, calm enjoyment shall keep your heart warm when the snow lies three feet deep upon your happiness. Love your friends while you have them with you, love them with usury, so that the memory of this love may remain rich and inexhaustible in the hour of separation.

While you may, fortify yourself in hope, in

trustfulness toward God. Do not delay knocking at your Father's door until want and suffering come; who knows if then you will be able to find the way? It is so sad to know that we are wanting, to find ourselves face to face with spiritual poverty, yet to be unable to get what we need, and to have the terrible assurance borne in upon us that it is too late.

THE NEED OF CONTENTMENT

THE FRIEND: We should learn to be frugal, to live on little, and not, like spoiled children, to deny ourselves naught. We should accustom ourselves to everything that life may bring, and learn in the evil days to keep faith in God! It is more necessary to believe in Him then than in the days of gladness. All right-minded men have a wonderful power of adaptation to circumstances; they understand how to adjust themselves to the demands conditions make upon them. Wisdom raises them above mere events. Others wait for a favorable wind to fill their sails; if it shifts, they lose their bearings; if it dies out, they lose all headway. Mere reeds that bend with every breeze,

they do not know the secret of the will. They do not live, they merely exist.

We must exert ourselves to find *terra firma*, the ground of Faith in God and in ourselves.

God loves us. Since this is so, it matters little what the days bring forth. Evil things, even, must bend to His will and do our service. All things work together for good to them that love God: or, in Luther's fine way of putting it: *Dennen die Gott Lieben, müssen alle Dinge zum Besten dienen.*

Hands that strike us, dogs that bite us, disease that wastes us, burdens that bow us down, are all turned into blessings unawares. Every blow received becomes a helping hand; every snare set to entrap us becomes an instrument of preservation and of safety. Even the stones hurled to crush us heap into ramparts for our defence.

STA VIATOR!

THE FRIEND: *Sta Viator!* passer-by, bowed under your burden, stop, stop by this mountain-stream rushing to the valley. Sit down on this old tree-trunk. Your soul is distressed within you. Why do you put off seeking a place of rest

in God until you have assured your material well-being? Do you not know that you are becoming the slave of your anxieties, and that once en-chained you can never regain freedom and peace of mind? Grant that you realize your heart's desire, and that the misfortune you fear is averted; how long do you imagine that the sky will stay clear? The fairer its blue, the more you will tremble lest you see it overcast. The pact that you must make is not conditional, but above all conditions. Trust in God, not because the road is sure and the horizon bright, but whether the way be sure or not, the heavens charged or not; let your peace of mind hang on no single ray of sunlight. Your faith in God, the one thing that really counts, make stronger in you, and the passing shadows of life will disturb you less and less.

THE MAIN THING

THE FRIEND: The main thing is to have a firm faith in God. The rest follows naturally. Don't wait for a smiling sun to give you a sense of security, or for some high human power to decide

in your favor, or for the postman to bring you happiness in a letter. No more should you fear lest ill-fortune fall upon you from the clouds, or seize you by the hand of an enemy, or unexpectedly break into your home. Fortune or misfortune, every mischance that lies in wait for you at a turn in the road, behind closed doors, in human intrigue directed against you, or below the horizon of the future, depends for its power to harm you on what is in your heart. Know this: there is a peace that the world cannot give and which it cannot take away.

THE TROUBLE IS IN OURSELVES

THE FRIEND: Why not surrender to the evidence? Does man's peace lie in circumstances? Can events give it or take it away? That they can is the old and fatal illusion. Here are the facts: When one cause for anxiety departs, another, unnoticed before, is at hand to take its place. *The trouble is in ourselves.* You cannot remove anxiety by removing the specific objects with which it is from time to time associated. It will always find reasons for being. Let our timid, trembling hearts

be but reassured and we shall enjoy a peace that nothing can destroy, since it is God who gives it.—I am quite certain that there is such a peace and that the true principle of life is not beyond our reach. Everywhere it borders this poor and fragmentary world in which we wander. When now and then for a single moment it is revealed to us, everything around becomes luminous. If we could only grasp it, make it operative throughout, there would be no situation, however sad, complicated, and apparently hopeless, to which it would not bring a light to illumine our way.

I love thee, O Son of Man! for Thy strength and Thy sweetness, for Thy simplicity, Thy courage, Thine infinite tenderness, for Thy glance which strengthens and pardons us, quickens us and lifts us up; for all that Thou hast brought us of consolation, of peace and of warmth of heart. Abide Thou with us. Teach us to see the divine spark imprisoned in every stone of the highway.

MEMENTO

THE FRIEND: Once and for all, bear this in mind: no perfect peace can be brought you by events. The causes of our griefs and cares change even as the days, and happiness will affright you if misfortune lets you out of its clutches. Whether your children are young or old, at home or elsewhere, sick or well, they will always be a source of anxiety to you; and so it is with everything that we can keep or lose, acquire or wish for. If you wait for chance to bring you peace of mind, you will never know what it is to enjoy it. Be a man and aspire to a higher peace. You will then walk with a firmer footstep along the changing ways of life, for you will have a shelter within yourself and something stable on which you can always rest. No detached event, no combination of circumstances, however grave, can then threaten the whole future of your existence. Found yourself firmly in the one thing that is necessary to your life, the infinite love of the Father; and all other good things shall be added unto you. And moreover you will become a place of refuge to other men and women, to those whom you love

and even to those unknown to you whose path may happen to cross your own.

ON THE HEIGHTS

AFTER the long and difficult ascent the rest here is full of charm. Such a horizon more than makes up for all the fatigue, and the pure, crisp air gives us a new sense of living.

On every side, as far as eye can reach, rolling pastures stretch away, covered with thick grass and brilliant little flowers. We see all sorts of butterflies, countless beetles, and birds unknown to the plain. Lower down the mountain-side lies the beautiful forest through which we just passed, while lower still are the vineyards, the golden grain-fields, and the river running out of sight in the distance. But the eye always returns to that zone of glaciers ringing the horizon. There, right in front of us, girdling the winding vale of Anniviers, is the glacier of the Rothhorn. It looks like a great stream of frozen lava descending upon the valley. Great white jagged walls hem it in, and along the masses of snow run crests of spotless

white. Following them the eye crosses glistening fields, rises to the peaks and drops down again into deep valleys. It is all a silent desert covered with an eternal shroud of virgin snow.

Away at the extreme right, beyond Mont Pleureur and the red needles of Arolla, lies an enchanted land of splendor. Crests rise from the fluffy snow fields, towers and spires spring in air, domes arch, a multitude of lofty and forbidding rocks, armor-clad in gleaming ice. It is Mont Blanc that we see, bristling with peaks, rent into precipices and yawning crevasses, and stretching away to the vast snowy plains of the glacier of Trient.

The impression is of length of time, of massive strength and majestic calm. From these heights how great the world seems, and man how small!

THE FRIEND: Fill your soul with the spectacle and take the memory of it away with you. Then when you breathe the stifling air of the great cities, of the crowded theatres, of sick-rooms, or the poisonous miasma in which diplomats sit in council, churchmen shape their plots, money-makers count their stakes, pedants prate, and fools parade, shut your eyes and return here in

spirit. It will revive you. And if, peradventure, pride should possess you, compare your stature with this stateliness! You will draw wholesome lessons from it that will put you back into your place, and keep you from becoming in your vanity of the flesh like the gnat in its impudent fragility, drunk with the sunshine.

But do not go too far in this prostration of the spirit. Do not lessen the true value of the soul by abasing it before the immensity of matter. Do not go to the length of measuring human worth by the ell or the value of your life by the number of its years. Do you estimate the painter's canvas by the yard or the work of the poet by the pound or bushel?

Your stature is but a few cubits and the duration of your life is but a span. Yet you have no right before these mountains, giants in space and time, to proclaim yourself small or mean by comparison. Within you dwells a sublimity not theirs, were it only that of your misery. Whatever the majesty of their contour, the beauty of their landscapes, they are only signs destined to reveal you to yourself, to symbolize to you that spiritual world of which you bear the impress in your own soul.

Such as you are, a little creature frail and mortal, you can none the less form thoughts and perceive realities which were before the mountains were brought forth, and shall be after they return to dust. Through action or through suffering you can attain to heights and depths for which there is no measure in the visible world.

The poor woman overwhelmed with cares, but still hoping, loving, and working; the thinker and the believer, who in the darkness keep nevertheless their faith in the existence of the light; the poor relieving the poor; the afflicted consoling the afflicted; the injured pardoning the injurer; the martyrs in the cause of knowledge, faith, justice, or country—all these are greater than these peaks. There dwells in them a beauty purer than the blue of heaven or the whiteness of snow. The man who remains steadfast in his soul before all obstacles or the essays of the wicked, as inaccessible to threats as to corruptions, fearing not to stand alone in the face of hostile numbers, is a rampart more firmly founded and worthier of your admiration and wonder than the sheer walls of the abyss rising there and seeming to say, “Thou shalt not pass.”

LOVE YOUR FRIENDS

THE FRIEND: Love your friends and do not put them from you. Tell them of your love not once, but often; and do not merely tell it, but prove your words to them and repeat the proof. Open your heart and love them kingly-wise. Make merry for them, make them happy, give them brightness, make your home cheery for them! All moments are propitious. The lost opportunities we most regret were opportunities for loving.

A WORD WITH THE BIRDS

IS what you say so very serious, little linnet, and what you sing in mounting "higher still and higher," light-winged lark, since you repeat it so often? Are you afraid that all its message has not been caught and comprehended? How sure we feel when we hear you that all is well! I wish you could make man believe it.

IN THE FOREST

AMONG the sweetest moments of life are those spent eating cherries in the tree or wild strawberries in the forest. First of all, they remind us of our youth, that time of smiling aspect when we lived in harmony with all nature, understood by the trees, the insects, and the flowers, and understanding them in return. No subtilized pleasure of refined life equals that of keeping one's balance in the top of a tree in company with the sparrows and orioles. To remember it afterward is pure joy in which the heart basks like a lizard in the sunshine.

Whether from affection for the early years, or from profound attachment to simple ways of life, I love these pleasures now no less than I did then. Here in this little nameless valley I seem to taste a moment of eternity.

Ancient pines lift their solitary tops amid rocks hoary with time. A close growth of broom covers the ground with a golden fleece, and here and there among the bushes, which are giving up their warm odors to the sun, some shoots of the wild strawberry have pushed their heads. The ripe

fruit perfumes the air, and I accept of the bounty which they offer for my picking.

I pick the first for you, dear child, who lie helpless on your bed of pain. You will seem to find in their aroma a thought from the soul of the great woods.

The next are for me, and I eat them with delight, communing at the universal table, a guest of the good God, fellow-feaster with the linnet and with the cricket that sips the dew from the humid hollow of the leaves. The saxifrage and harebell make bouquets for the table, and could there be a better seat than this mossy root which holds you like an arm?

THE FRIEND: Enjoy this moment without disquiet, without regret. Become a child again. Drink in strength and simplicity, and let the flowers and the woods tell you what they know better than man knows with his short-sighted and timid wisdom. Take root in the heart of things. Store up energy against future struggles and controversies and sights of suffering and sin. Purge your soul and clarify it in these soft rays of falling day. The mystery of consolation is afame in the broom and trembles in the dew on the

branches. May the spirit that inspires and sustains breathe from this corner of the forest across the pages of your soul and leave a lasting message upon them.

THE ETERNAL IN THIS EPHEMERAL

THE sun plays over the pines. From their green boughs, sweating bark, and cones swollen by the heat, exudes balmy resin, and even the ground, covered with dead and sun-baked needles, distils a subtle fragrance. At the threshold of the wood the alpine meadow is vibrant with the chant of crickets and the merry whirr of locusts. Here is joy, life, love; the insect folk are making holiday; the atmosphere is theirs. The forest, grave and old, hums with flies.

WHERE shall we look for you when half a year is gone, frolic butterflies, pearl-armored beetles, sonorous thorough-basses? You frantic little musicians, whirling madly in a ray of noonday sun, where will your rattles be, your pipes, your tambourines?

Between the arches of the pines over there I catch a glimpse of snow-fields. They warn me that all this joyousness will have a winding-sheet. The forest will still sing its song, but its song will be the sound of torment; and the capricious flight of snowflakes dancing down the whistling north wind will replace that of the bees and dragon-flies.

THE FRIEND: Your soul seems a prey to gloomy thoughts. Must you have katydids even in winter, and butterflies to live for a hundred years? Is not their frailty the secret of their charm? What would become of the freshness of roses if they were strong as steel, or of the beauty of sunsets if the sun were always setting? Must a thing last to give you pleasure? A lightning-flash would gain by lasting longer what a heart-cry gains by expansion into words, or an hour of intense joy by dilution into a constant experience. —When you are ironic I hardly know you. You have always stood to me for what is enduring, and now you show yourself in a new light. The thought of these passing joys grieves me and oppresses me. My mind reaches out after a joy that shall never die.

THE FRIEND: Whatever is at all, is enduring. A

thing need not be eternal to have a share in eternity; it suffices that it be complete in itself—time is not an element. Nothing is wanting to this feast of sunshine, and if there seems a shadow on the picture it is in your own heart. Do not let these little ephemeral creatures sadden you; if you will lend your ears you will learn a lesson from them. Notice that there is not a discordant sound but that all is blended in a harmony, full, vibrant, and intelligible. This universal song sings of the intoxication of life, of peace, of trust. They have but a single drop of the ocean, but that drop is pure. Why should you pity them?

—They are unconscious of their happiness; they might as well not have it.

THE FRIEND: Undeceive yourself. Does the star know its own splendor, the child its grace, heaven the depth of its blue vault? Has not the soul that is unconscious of its beauty one beauty the more? To be generous and kind, must we know that we are so? Do the heroes whose calm strength we admire think themselves heroic?

Knowledge is not all; besides, what do we know? Very little, to be sure, and not enough to live on. Joy comes to these little creatures by

other routes than knowledge. They live upon the exhaustless funds that nourish all created things. They are suckled by nature, like an infant at the breast. If they had minds to reason with as you do, they too would live in a world of darkness; their joy would vanish in air and their song would cease.

—But can I keep from thoughts and prophecies? To what end am I endowed with the gift of reflection? And, indeed, are you not always urging me to use it?

THE FRIEND: To use it for clearer sight, not to make night of noonday. Your reason should strengthen, not dishearten you. If it spoils your life, it is because you set it at tasks with which it is not competent to deal. You discourage it, trying to harness it to the impossible. How can it aid you to live if you exhaust it? You ask it to furnish you an explanation of the universe, and when you have installed yourself in the product of its futile effort, the lack of air and space stifles you and your joy fades like a flower in a cavern. The result is that the tiniest cricket singing under a spear of grass is more assured than you.

—How often have I felt with grief the full force of what you say. But I am consumed with anxiety. How can one live tranquil in this unstable world? Nothing is firm under our feet, and the sky threatens to fall about our heads. Even joy makes us fear.

THE FRIEND: Poor child! I pity your distress. If only you knew how sweet it is to trust, and how vain to invite care! If you had predicted every misfortune, signalled every storm on the horizon, something would still have happened whose coming you had not foreseen, from the blue of heaven a bolt would have fallen on your head. Give over then this useless trepidation. Gird your loins. Why build up a fabric of cares wherein to exercise your best energies to your own undoing?

Are you not more than an ant or a fire-fly? If these, that a night's frost takes off, drink at the chalice of pure joy, will you save for yourself the lees amassed in some impure and troubled cup? Learn the lesson of divine carelessness of the morrow that speaks to you from this mountain. The world must indeed pass away, and doubtless there are good reasons why it should. Do not

spend yourself deplored it, but seize from each moment what it brings you.

Does all this movement, the unanimity of this vibrant concert mean nothing to you? No, though it is a sign that lies on the surface only, it has its meaning deep down in the heart of things. The base of the world is solid enough for you to build upon it—that is what the star says, riding in the heavens, and the insect creeping in the grass; this it is which sets humming in the sun these innumerable swarms of life. Be a man as the ant is an ant; live the life of a man, go his way. Do thine own work, and be not disturbed about the rest, and thou, too, shalt know peace, joy, and the pleasure of all good things.

IN TROUBLous HOURS

Tell me thy grief.

IN TROUBLous HOURS

KING OF MISERY

THE FRIEND:

CHRIST said, "I am not alone, the Father is with me." In certain hours you, too, are able to say it, and with joyfulness. Why, then, in others, in the dark hours when your court of miseries assembles round you, should you say in sadness, I am not alone?

What have you done to condemn yourself to such society? Has God given you a soul for you to make of it a grim guest-chamber, filling its highest seats with visitors of evil aspect, whose discourse and reflections chill your heart and take the courage out of you?

What is it that these dark-faced friends whisper so low to you? So they say that life is evil, that there is no hope, that the bad has vanquished

the good, that it is useless to struggle in any noble cause? They recall all the bitterness of the past, and point out new enemies preparing to descend upon you in the future. And, afterward, do these lords of care offer you a helping hand? Not they! They only know how to make complaint. You are wrong to harbor such dreary courtiers always ready to intrude upon your solitude when you are harassed and weary. Like undutiful sons, they have a way of making themselves beloved for the evil they have wrought. Clear your mind of them as you would a room of cobwebs.

INGRATITUDE

AH, ingratitude, how it tortures the heart —eats into it like a corrosive!

THE FRIEND: Yet, judging from the number of ingrates, there must be some pleasure in its practice. There are people whose wine and whose gratitude make them morose, but whose ingratitude is fairly jovial. If they are obliged to thank anyone they do it with bad grace; but they practise ingratitude with a smiling countenance, with spontaneity, with unconstraint, with the per-

fect ease of ducklings on the water; for they are in their element.

Other vices thrive in certain latitudes only, but this vice is cosmopolitan. It flourishes in every stage of society, at all ages, in the garret or in the cellar; it is at home everywhere. To-day you find it in blond ringlets, and think it a child; tomorrow it confronts you under gray locks, in that revolting old-age at the close of a life that has been one long fall. When its wounds come from the great you take it for a fine lady; but beware of metamorphoses, for at the first provocation she will show you the features of a hag.

There is the ingratitude of children and that of parents, of peoples and of kings, or of the ruling classes; of chiefs and of subordinates, of masters and of servants, of the public and of those before it, of the rich and of the poor.

And there are special forms of ingratitude practised toward special classes;—as, for example, ingratitude toward doctors, toward ministers, toward old servants worn by hardships, toward singers with lost voices, toward devoted citizens ruined in the public behalf, toward heroes dead on all the fields of honor and sacrifice. And finally there is

that worst of all ingratitudes, that of man for woman: go question the forgotten, the abandoned, the heart-broken, the despairing.

The propagation of ingratitude is inevitable. A plant that flourishes in every soil, whose winged seed flutters on every breeze, cannot fail to find abundant root. If you perform a good deed or expend yourself in any fashion, you cultivate ingratitude. Even the man who does no service to anyone cannot escape it.

Nothing is so hard to bear as ingratitude. It is a heavy cross, to which are sometimes added the tortures of a Calvary. It is ingenious, full of novel resources and of inexhaustible invention. It inflicts upon humanity much of its most poignant suffering, breaks many a heart and ruins many a life. In very truth it would seem harder for men to forgive favors done them than to pardon injuries.

—But the saddest thing of all is that ingratitude discourages us from well-doing.

THE FRIEND: In that we are wrong. It is a question of the aim and of the point of view. If you sow kindness for the sake of reaping gratitude, the after-taste is certain to be bitter and in

the end, disgusted with the results, you will abandon the business which brings such poor returns. Do good, follow the right, give your labor and open your arms to affection, without counting too much on your reward. But do not show the sad countenance of certain well-intentioned people who go about anticipating ingratitude and weeping over it in advance. That is one way to provoke it. There are many other ways, however. For example, we arouse ingratitude by doing our good at the wrong time, by rushing into it, by cheapening it through an over-readiness to bestow it. To make a man appreciate the favor we do him is to render him a service in itself. Envelop your kindness in a little dignity, brusqueness even. But, above all, do not hide yourself when those under obligation to you, your friends, those younger than yourself, wish to thank you. Stay and take their acknowledgments. It may be an ordeal for your modesty, but there are some ordeals you must learn to bear for the sake of others.

The victims of ingratitude should not lose sight of the fact that of all benefactors, in every age and every country, God is oftenest forgotten. Yet never on this account has He ceased to mani-

fest His love. And in the death of His Son Jesus on the cross of shame, symbol for all time of human ingratitude, the culmination is reached. Here, too, the Man of Sorrows may say to his brethren, Come unto me, and I will refresh you.

BITTER MEMORIES

THE FRIEND: Do not condemn yourself to bitter recollections.

Why so honor the offence as to write it on the tablets of your memory? Is your heart so large that you can afford to give so much place to resentment? What a pity that the little man saves from the wreck of forgetfulness should consist first of all in the wrongs which have been done him! There are deeds that are unpardonable; people who merit neither excuse, nor good-will, nor forbearance. Is this sufficient reason for remembering them forever? Let the injury fall to the ground and do not stoop to recover it. Stoop rather to pick the flower, however humble, that smiles up at you here in this valley.

FORGET AND FORGIVE

IN the very depths of yourself dig a grave. Let it be like some forgotten spot to which no path leads; and there, in the eternal silence, bury the wrongs that you have suffered. Your heart will feel as if a weight had fallen from it, and a divine peace will come to abide with you.

BE SILENT

PUT thy finger on thy lip, suffer and be silent. Who art thou to speak before His dread and holy Majesty?

I am *His* child.

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

SHALL the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

THE FRIEND: Not if you do it in the vain spirit of criticism and contention; nothing is so sterile as the spirit of controversy. But who shall forbid us to speak? When one suffers he has

the right to murmur, even to cry out. His very silence becomes a cry, for when suffering can neither protest nor lament, it has attained the height of eloquence. Do not hesitate, frail vessel of clay, to tell your Creator everything. Be openly sincere. Do not call yourself handsome if you are ugly, or happy if you are miserable. Do not seek to please a Greater than yourself by approving what your conscience condemns. Do not offer your Father the dishonor of confusing Him with that rich man of whom the aged Sirach speaks when he says: "The rich doeth a wrong, and he threateneth withal; the poor is wronged, and he must entreat besides." Tell Him your trouble; say to Him: *Behold how I am made!* Who knows if perhaps your feeling is not shared beyond the reach of man's imagination. The healing of all infirmities, the making of the blind to see and of the deaf to hear, the freeing of captives, the winning of the wicked from the evil of their ways, and the bringing of the dead back to life—this is the hidden design working out in the mysteries of our life. There is one thing certain, and that is, that however poor and mean the vessel, however magnificent the Potter, they should act

in accord, not for the preservation of things as they are, but for their bettering.

TELL ME THY GRIEF

GUARD thy secret carefully, poor heart, thou hast nothing more precious; let not the gaze of the profane pollute it. But why hide from Me the thing that I know, the thing which it would be well for thee to show Me? Bring forth all thy pain, cover nothing before Me, and thou shalt be comforted. I know thee, I have taken thy measure. For all that thou dost suffer I love thee.

REGRET

REGRET for the right object is very precious, but so many people employ it wrongly. We find them adhering to the evil thought and regretting the good. Regret the days you lose, the hours you fritter away; regret the speech that wounded, the unjust suspicion, the hasty judgment. But never regret that you followed your heart when it led you toward confidence,

toward sincerity, toward kindness. Regret neither the tears you have shed, nor the service you have rendered the ungrateful, nor that you have kept your illusions, preserved your human tenderness, your hope, and even your grief. For all these things, it is well to live and die impenitent.

THE WICKED

THE FRIEND: I see you wounded in soul, smeared with blood, your garments muddied, scratched and torn as though by claws. You come from among your fellows as one escaped from the hands of brigands. There are indeed evil men in the world.

—And yet these are the very men you would have me love.

THE FRIEND: My poor child; I understand you and pity you. You wish to flee their commerce, a quite legitimate desire, which does not surprise me. You hate their wickedness because it is ugly, and you think it is not honest for me to represent them to you as worthy of your love.

—Then let me despise and hate them.

THE FRIEND: Why add one more to the ills

they have done you? To despise makes you suffer, to hate does you wrong. To despise is to blot out of the book of life, to weigh and find wanting, to examine and reject. Can you cast your neighbor out and not suffer? Do you not live by hope? To despise is the act of despair; and so it is to hate. He who hates, excommunicates and delivers over to perdition. Can you pronounce the supreme sentence, declare another lost, and not agonize with the pity of it?

—They are past all hope.

THE FRIEND: And if they are, is not theirs the misfortune? Since of themselves they roll into the abyss, why should you suspend the stone of your contempt around their necks?

—So be it. Then let me turn away and forget them.

THE FRIEND: If you turn away it will be only to lament their fate. Can you forget the fate itself? Is not that the great shadow which looms between us and all light? What a misfortune to be wicked and evil-minded! Only one sentiment is possible in the face of such a calamity—pity. Do you not pity them? Are they not to be pitied?

—They are, and in truth I do pity them. But what good does my pity do them?

THE FRIEND: To pity is better than to scorn and hate, it is truer, more just. They will jeer at your pity, but it is good for you to feel it, good for you and for the cause of humanity. To pity is to preserve hope, to care, and implies that all is not lost.

—I see nothing but night, and not a star. Men's iniquity is as bottomless as the abyss and as impossible to remove as mountains.

THE FRIEND: Look into the abyss and say, "I know not who shall fill you up." Look toward the hills and say, "I know not who shall pull you down." But *have pity on the wicked*; and the way of this pity will lead you slowly to the heights where one comes to understand how the abysses are filled and the mountains made low.

SCHISM

MY brothers fall on one another tooth and nail; even when they are away from each other they hurl anathemas and injuries. And what an affliction it is to me who love them all. It seems as though my heart were their battle-field.

Oh! the schism of minds, the horrid breach that tears to tatters the tissue of humanity! It has torn me asunder, and the living parts cry out to be joined together again. From the midst of disruption I stretch out my arms toward unknown friends. I would break down obstacles, cross chasms; and I suffer, I suffer!

THE FRIEND: Unhappy lot! But Another, who makes His sun to rise on them all, shares it with you. Let the remembrance of this console you—but see, too, that your pain be not fruitless. In every grief borne courageously a new world is fashioning and slowly developing for the future. Build up in your soul the lofty city of Peace, well within sound of the battle that is waging, in the midst of its discordant cries. Unite in secret what the world parts asunder; broaden your

thought, take in what has been shut out, transform rivalry into collaboration: draw together, associate, fuse, preserve the Faith, and prepare for Unity.

IN DISTRESS

THE FRIEND: Peace be with you! Why this face all discomposed, these tired hands?
—My heart is torn with the great grief of living; my whole being is nothing but an open wound. Everything that exists seems tainted with death. Men appear shadows, their thoughts dreams, their undertakings chimeras. Our suffering has no limit, we can get no balance for our burdens, our offences pass all count, and what is our strength? The force of a reed against the granite hills. Can there be such a thing as joy for a man who knows life? confidence in the future for him who is sure of nothing? Has humanity a morrow? We are like ants whose habitation is destroyed by the foot of a careless or brutal passer-by. The poor things rush about, toil to bring the wreck together again, succor the wounded, and restore their devastated galleries. And when they have

barely finished, another kick overturns the fruit of all their labors. I lack the strength to begin again. I sit by the ruins and weep, and I envy the deep peace of the dead.

THE FRIEND: Let me weep with you; I understand your tears. For ages they have burned my cheek. Poor humanity, buffeted by every wind! times unnumbered have your accumulated sufferings melted my soul. Your weariness is sacred to me. Would that I might put my hands beneath your bleeding feet, lift you in my arms, and soothe you as mothers do, that you might forget your pain. I love you for all your hurts; but still more do I admire you for your patient courage.

That, burdened, broken, on a desert way and under a brazen heaven, you should still move onward is the finest thing I know. That ideal beings, pure and happy, should live lives of radiant perfection is beautiful because it conforms to our conception of an intelligent order in the universe; but that you and your children, misshapen with evil, grief-stricken, consumed by fever, poisoned by pestilence, physical and moral, should still drag yourselves toward the goal; that in the dust where death lays you low you should plant the

banner of hope; that within the dark shadow you should preserve your faith—this is sublime, it is divine. Neither the splendor of suns nor the hymn of their creation holds me now. My eyes have turned away from Olympian visions; they no longer behold aught but your Calvaries. Come, weary pilgrim, spent with vigils and strife, lay thy head on my heart, and let me guard thy sleep as one guards a treasure. May it be profound and sweet, and may my hands, caressing thy burning brow, and my being hovering over thine, bear in upon thee the sense of a boundless Pity forever inclined toward man. . . .

He sleeps. How many questions does sleep resolve! Happy are they who can still sleep! Asleep the prisoner is free, the sick man well, the exile by his fireside. There are afflictions in whose presence every attempt at comforting is vain and every word an offence. There is nothing to offer but open arms—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

Mortal weariness and heaviness of heart, dismal loneliness, with no longer anything left to relieve it—this is the end of so many martyrs in a good cause! The unequal effort has exhausted

everything — willingness, courage, patience, and even the faculty of suffering. It is a rout, a shipwreck. The stars have set below the horizon of the soul, and a night has descended which promises no morrow. The vanquished have drunk the cup to the dregs; they have lain down in the dust, their eyes vacant from that last dread conviction that everything is over. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

They stretched their arms toward their help, and it came not. They counted on Someone hidden behind the visible world, and this Someone did not disclose Himself. Like a man forgetful of his word, He failed at the critical moment; and yet, God of the vanquished, if they have kept their faith in Thee, what a demonstration for us of how Thou dost draw men! As the compass to the north, they turned instinctively toward Thy light: they believed in Thee rather than in life, in death, in realities that the hands may touch and the eyes see. Their ashes proclaim Thee.

God of the vanquished, if the trace of Thy passing is left resplendent on the face of the stars; if Nature in flower has kept the perfume of it; if space be but the reflection of Thy great-

ness, there is a spot where Thou shouldst rather be found than in any one of these—it is where Thy children fall, overcome by superhuman struggles and labors. Elsewhere Thou sendest Thy messengers, here Thou art Thyself. Here Thy presence glows like a fire. These vanquished ones are the touchstones of a world more beautiful than this. There is that within them which shall remain when all the rest has vanished like a vapor. So it is that when they have gone down into the gulf, those left hear a voice come out of it, saying, *Here am I.*

Life issues from their death, light from their tomb; their bones flourish like Aaron's rod, and where they were struck down indomitable courage and hope spring up, as seed from the furrow.

INTERRUPTIONS

MY time is broken into bits. Too many little duties and anxieties claim a share, and troublesome people are always waiting to spoil any precious moments that are left. Oh, days without a break, in which the workman may delve undisturbed, giving free rein

to the thoughts that possess him; days of creation, of peace, forgetful of the flying hours, that attain almost the stature of eternity, I love you and long for you; shall I ever know you again?

I am like a race-horse ready to run his course, setting out full of life. But scarcely has he gone ten paces when a brutal hand reins him in, dragging on his bit, and spoiling his effort. When he starts to follow his impulse he is made to curb it, only to dash forward once more at a cut of the whip. What will become of his zeal under such treatment?

THE FRIEND: It is in truth demoralizing. But in this very bondage one may find a certain new liberty of mind. If, in spite of all your efforts, you can get only scraps of time for the beloved work, save all these scraps piously. Time is so precious that its smallest particles are valuable, and for him who knows how to utilize them the hours acquire a singular capacity—in one of them years may be condensed, even centuries.

Have you not sometimes in wandering over these heights encountered a fog? The distance is cut off, and you do well to make your way, forced as you are to test each rolling stone with

foot and stick lest you take a tumble. Then from time to time the curtain is torn apart, only to be quickly drawn again. But what a profound impression that rapid vision leaves upon you! Do you remember one day when, our shoes heavy with moist earth, our backs soaked with frequent downpours, and our eyes drowned in chill vapors, we saw between two ragged clouds of gray a bit of brilliant blue sky? Do you remember in a flash of sunlight over the alpine vastness, millions of wild pansies and golden buttercups? Did not that moment pay for the toil of the tramp, and would it not have lost something of its charm had it lasted longer? In fact, life seen from one point of view is the art of seizing stealthy moments, of utilizing remnants.

The sculptor finds a bit of marble, and carves a masterpiece. On a scrap of waste-paper the poet in an idle hour writes an immortal song. Collect the stones that lie helter-skelter in this gorge, and you might build a cathedral. Is not the earth made from a fragment of the sun, and man from a breath of the Infinite?

Courage then! Put your soul into the few scattered moments that remain. You will never

regret it. Would that as this poor drop of time falls into the abyss, a ray of beauty or a smile of kindness might be reflected in its passing!

TRANSGRESSION

SIN is a great revealer. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Especially does it mark the discovery of some wretchedness. But a general human truth is contained in this symbolic utterance, as in this verse of the poet:

And no man knows himself till he hath suffered.

Grief over wrong-doing throws an unexpected light on the thing that we are. Through our pain we learn to know of our original nobility and of our share of initiative in our own affairs, which is, properly speaking, our liberty. Were we only children of the dust, the result of mechanical forces, we should not know the pain of having done evil, because for us there would be no evil. Do not say this pain is hereditary, for if my distress come from my ancestors, from custom and education, whence, pray, do they have it to pass

it on to me? Moreover, though it were ingrafted, the plant of repentance could not flourish in our souls unless it found nourishment there. And sometimes, appalled at the majesty of evil, I have regained courage from the thought that after all this very evil is the surest proof of a higher life. How should we say it is night, unless we had known the day? how should evil have any existence in our minds if we were not akin to the good? Thus one proves the existence of the other. In the very sentiment of guilt, with its poignancy and tragedy, is a *sursum corda*.

He who has never trembled before the evil he has done, or shed tears over his past sins, is ignorant of one entire aspect of the world and of the soul. He lacks just so much of being the man that another is who has had these experiences. I cannot fancy what humanity would be without sin. It would lose at one stroke, along with its misery, the great beauty of its upward striving, which is its chief charm. I would I were able to sound the depth of truth in this exclamation of Saint Augustine's—*Felix culpa!*

THE GOD OF POOR SINNERS

GOD is great, fathomless, adorable, whether He shine from the face of the stars or smile in the chalice of a flower. He is beautiful in the dark night as in the splendid noonday, beautiful in the conscience of just men, more beautiful still in pity for the suffering. But there is no God comparable to the God of poor sinners.

REPENTANCE

THE FRIEND: What are you doing there in the dust?

—I am covering my face and weeping for shame. Can it be I who have done this thing? I am overcome with self-disgust. If only I might hide away forever, disappear in my repentance! I would I had the power!

THE FRIEND: You are wrong. Passive regret is only an addition to your fault. A bad kind of pride is hidden under this astonishment at having failed. Yes, it is indeed you who have done this thing, and it will be well for you to remember it,

in order not to judge others. But what good can come from being disgusted with yourself? Not disgust, but care, courage, and foresight are needed for healing the sick.

Raise yourself out of the dust, and dry your eyes that you may see more clearly. Endure your misery like a man. God will remit your fault; do you make reparation, profit from the experience, sow and toil, watch and pray, march and fight. Woe to those who stagnate in sterile repentance and enervating tears! They pass the half of their days lamenting the faults of the other half, and their life falls back useless into the abyss of the past.

AND JESUS LOOKED ON PETER

THAT look! charged with shadow at the sight of suffering, of uncleanness, of wickedness, of all the burdens poor humanity bears, all the chains, galling or shameful, that she drags along! Our dim souls seem to Him as the great vacant eyes of the blind, those poor caverns filled with sombre gloom like mourning worn for the departed light. And in

His eyes the disciple saw dimly now and again
the shadow of some mysterious Calvary, before
which their hearts grew big with fear.

But his eyes were open also upon the world
above, with remembrance of which they seemed
filled. They radiated that peaceful certitude which
the Divine Presence gives to the heart, and their
calm said: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the
world.

Lights from the realm of justice, the dawn of
a transformed future, peace, tenderness, pity,
pardon—all this lived in His glance. No pean
of song, no inspired word of the Prophets, no
beauty of form created by the Arts to represent
the splendor of the invisible, has ever brought to
man the revelation that dwelt in that glance. We
live from its light, and when its splendor fades
for us the shadows creep in, joy vanishes, a fear-
ful twilight invades all our paths, and the cold
of death envelops us,—of that other death which
knows no hope.

May this glance find thee out, whoever thou
art; fallen, may it raise thee; wounded, may it
heal thee; lost, may it lead thee home. If only
it be fixed upon thee when thy own eyes close, to

die shall be for thee to fall asleep under the watch of Him who has said: I am the resurrection and the life.

UNDERNEATH THY WING

O GOD, save me from the world I comprehend not, the world of fatality and fearful shadows. Lead me into Thy luminous realm, where all is clear through trust in Thee. Let not my living soul fall into the grasp of necessities insensible and dead. What though I be afflicted, if I know that Thou knowest it—that Thou art its beginning and its end! What though I walk in the dark, if Thou art there! Give me inward calm, and if not joy, then such surrender as befits a son. When the whirlwind passes hide me underneath Thy wing, and make my weakness strong by Thy presence. If I am lost, find me; if I fall, stay Thou near by.

THE GATES OF DEATH

*To live is not all ; to die, still less.
The essential is that the Spirit shine forth through life
and death alike.*

THE GATES OF DEATH

THE TWO SLEEPS

SIT down by the cradle where childhood slumbers.

Sit down by the couch where the dead sleep.

In the child the future is cradled, like seed in the furrow. Each curly head is a promise. About it is a beating of wings; hopes swarm there and dreams murmur like bees in the heather.

Some day it will all end in the other sleep. Have you ever watched the dead as they lie in their calm, and wondered whom they await?

For they do wait, and on their silent lip hovers this appeal:

“Our days are accomplished. We have marched, we have fought, we have suffered. Where is He who shall tell us why?”

The dead wait for God.

And now, Lord, the word is Thine. Thou

knowest what man knows not. Thou knowest what the cradle promises, what the grave hides. In Thee is our hope.

If we had not this assurance the smiles of children would pierce our hearts—we must needs weep over cradles even more than over graves.

OH! DEATH!

OH, the death of those we love! First this suffering, this poor body worn with pain, these sunken eyes, these breathless words! Then this silence, this night, this dust! With what brutal insistence is the fact forced upon us that we are nothing! What rage for effacing our very footprints, so that all may clearly see that naught remains of us and all our hope! And even after death the proofs pursue us. To the living, everything cries: You are dust! To the dead, the tomb rehearses the tale. What is left us but eyes to weep?

THE FRIEND: Hope lives in your tears: even the despair that no longer sheds them is a form of deathless hope. To despair is to have seen one's star eclipsed. But behind the cloud it shines

still. Your hope holds fast. The powers of destruction multiply their evidences to little purpose: their triumph over you is one of those victories that are so loudly trumpeted because they are doubtful. There are those who, even dead, have yet to be slain; you are of their number. And what arguments can be brought to bear upon them? Repeat to them that they are dead? Does not that rather prove that they are living?

World-old is the lesson of things that proves and proclaims your insuperable nothingness. But in spite of all it has made you suffer, it is a lesson you speedily forget. You exist, and therefore you do not believe that you are nothing. Had you given credence to the revelation of death written across creation, glaring in the flame, howling in the tempest, yawning in the gulf, you would have fared according to your faith. Convinced of annihilation, you would have been annihilated. But that after being consumed in a thousand mortal fires you still live, comes from your faith in life. Whence have you this faith? From this great mechanism of a universe that grinds you to powder? No, you have your faith from God. It is His ineffaceable signature within you. Do not

yourself protest it. God dwells in you; this is your secret. You are of His race; His thought is active underneath your dust. You are a hope of God.

How shall that be which is no longer? How, when we are swallowed by the tomb, shall we subsist? Our life is wiped out like writing on a slate.

THE FRIEND: You can destroy the writing, but never the spirit, the sense of it. Though the perishable matter in which for a space a divine thought was incarnate be blotted out by time, vanish forever, the hope which is in you, the divine thought that animates your dust, remains. You are spirit, by the eternal Spirit active within you. In God is your life, your guaranteed identity: His remembrance, wherein nothing dies, preserves your remembrance. Have you ever meditated upon the transparent and infinite depth of this old-time word from the Psalms: *in thy light shall we see light?*

If our outward and visible life is in time and space, that is, in the ephemeral, our inward and spiritual life is in God, that is, in the eternal. In His light we see light. We should be blind

and dead, notwithstanding the perfection of our organism, were it not shot through with divinity. This marvel would be but a dead letter; now, on the contrary, it is a living word. The letter is effaced, but the spirit persists. Do not entangle yourself in the ruin of what has passed, as the outward aspect of this world shall pass away. Lift your eyes toward the light. Those whom you weep are not in the shadow and the dust. They are in God, as you also by the breath breathed into you are in God. The bond is not broken.

Our beloved never die. Do not admit their non-existence. The tenderness that follows them becomes for our hope a bridge reaching out from these mortal shores toward the imperishable land. You will see again all those you have loved; you will recognize them. Did you know them here by the fragile clay beneath which their life trembled? No, you knew them by the image impressed upon the clay, the life breathed into it. And often you sighed because of some vague wall of separation between them and you. You tried to come near them, yet were held off by something that, though still part of them in the flesh, was not they. In that great day when we meet again

the veil will have fallen away. No longer shall any mortal thing separate us. The union whose incompleteness here torments every strong, pure soul shall there be consummated. Learn to know yourself better; do not confound yourself with that which is not you. Compared to you this mechanical universe, with all things in it, is only a symbol, a perishable similitude of an immortal thought. Behold yourself in what you signify, since it is through this that you shall live hereafter. You should weep, because everything that is simply and sincerely human is good. Tears are the dew on that flower of the skies called hope. Weep, my son, but hope, dare to hope. Hoping is the finest sort of courage, and you can never have enough of it. It is not possible to expect too much of God: every anticipation will be infinitely surpassed. The purest light which for our souls falls on the beyond, the most blissful picture of the future meeting, is but poor imagery, a far and pale twilight in comparison with the morning of immortality.

—How good you are! Say all this again and again. I am the dusty wayfarer, you are the oasis. I am thirst, you are the spring; give to me

abundantly. Away from you, I doubt; with you, I believe, and the saying is fulfilled: " My sheep hear my voice."

THE SMILE

WHAT a smile my dear mother had in those last days!

THE FRIEND: Do not lose the remembrance of that smile. It is a reflection of the victory over death. To proclaim the gospel of freedom a dying voice is more potent than ringing words.

Every beautiful life remains among us like a gift of God: let the incense of it be to us as a sweet savor. What these dear ones who have flown away have left us, remains an imperishable treasure. Their peace enwraps us, calms our heart in the midst of struggles and steels our purpose in the hours that try our strength. Patient courage, imperturbable cheerfulness, trust in God—all these smile upon you from your mother's face.

Nor do we enter alone upon the final mystery; all the beloved dead are with us. Their presence

upholds us, their souls receive ours, and say to us: Good courage, friends! the trial grows sterner, but the end is near; behold the eternal peace, behold the harbor, behold the "blessed country"!

THROUGH the shadows that gather along our way, the watch of the dead shines star-like. It is a source of comfort and hope, helping us to endure and to push onward in assurance of the invisible, and in freedom from the perishable vanities of the world.

WHAT SHALL WE SAY?

WHAT can one say to those who are down and have nothing left to hope for, those upon whom death already has a hold, and who know not how to hope, to pray, or to believe?

THE FRIEND: Love them, and hold your peace. All questions are resolved by love. The silence of genuine love contains the infinitude of all revelation. Hold your peace. If you speak, no one will understand, and you will add a misery to the

burden of misery. You can explain nothing, prove nothing, to this being in torment. He cannot listen to you; you would only plunge him deeper into the night. You would think, perhaps, that you had spoken to the point, and you would go away from him satisfied with yourself. Oh, the cruel irony of offering aphorisms to those sinking in a sea of misfortune! Your offer is likely to prove to them this alone—that while they struggle in the waters, you are on shore.

Hold your peace. The sublimity of silence is unrecognized in the world, but it dwells in the marches of the realm of peace; it is one of the attendants of the Spirit. Where there is perfect, unprofaned silence you may know that God is near. Hold your peace.

But love these sufferers. Love them well and take their burden upon you. Enter with them into the furnace, share their suffering; and in this sacred silence of active devotion you shall shatter the stifling crucible in which misfortune isolates and imprisons its victims. They will be conscious of you beside them in their anguish, and when we are near one who loves us we are not far from God. They may not know this, but they will feel

an ineffable sweetness pass like a breath of heaven across their burning brows.

THE FRIEND: Lay the dead to sleep in His arms, however terrible their end.

GOD HAS TAKEN AWAY MY CHILD

GOD has taken my child from me.
THE FRIEND: Say not so.
—But Job said: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

THE FRIEND: We should take care not to misuse another man's words. Job found himself engulfed in inexplicable misfortunes. Knowing that everything is in God's hands, he preserved his faith, and blessed Him also in the evil days. In this he was right. But read the text again. Does it say that God had decided to take away from Job first his goods, then his children, and last of all his health? Does it consider God as the author of his misfortunes? No. Behind everything were the machinations of Satan. Could Job suspect this? Evidently he was deceived.

—But is there not some consolation in applying

his words to one's own case? What refuge remains, in the complexities of life, unless we consider ourselves entirely in God's hands? Is it not the last resource of the believer?

THE FRIEND: Assuredly: here we are of one mind. It is well to know that in the end everything leads back to God. But take care! You go too far when you say with the assurance of an eye-witness that God did this or that. To speak with such authority we should need a range of mind of which we fall far short. Can a man put his thumb on the Silberhorn and his forefinger on the Davalaghiri? Yet to undertake it would be far less rash than to think to compass within the limits of the mind certain domains of the divine activity apparently contradictory. Believe in the Father, in His love. It is the thing that best satisfies at once both mind and heart. Let no disordering of your life, no misfortune, no disgrace, no heart-break, mean to you or even suggest that the Father has forgotten you and loves you no longer. Keep His face fixed upon you, that face which consoles and reassures.

But if you see in Him a despoiler of children, you change His face. His brow threatens, He

becomes the despot who plays with our affections and our destinies, and admits in return nothing but silent obedience.

Here some good instinct guides us better than words fallen into formulas. If your son is murdered you do not say that God has killed him. Or if he dies a victim of his own rashness, do you attribute this to God? No, although God is somehow back of it all. But if your son dies from illness, you say ordinarily that it is His will and that He sent this evil.

Did God organize life as we live it to-day? Did our hygiene form part of His creation? Were our great cities in His plan? Do women and children, stifling in unsanitary factories, down the dark alleys and in the noisome courts of airless city quarters, suffer and die according to a fixed law of God? Surely God is behind these things also, and therein lies our hope of doing away with them. God's spirit will lead us from these sinks of corruption to the purity of the heights. But if I could believe evil and wretchedness to be conformable to His will all my zeal for attacking them would fail.

That a man should think of God as causing

directly everything that happens, just as he himself forms and executes his own plans, is an intolerable idea, subversive of all activity, transforming the religious life into an utterly penal existence. One can make no just estimate of the anguish and tortures that such a conception of religion has inflicted on the heart of man. From the pit of what hell did Job cry out such words as these?—" *If I had called and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.* For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds *without cause*. . . . Though I be perfect, he shall prove me perverse. . . . He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. . . . He will mock at the trial of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he veileth the faces of the judges thereof; if it be not he, who then is it?"

How many other men have lived in the asphyxiating furnace of like ideas; and these ideas are so horrible that, in the face of certain forms of evil, the dual conception of the world, in spite of its terrors, appears to me more reassuring, more conformable to our minds, and, above all, less dubious than this impracticable tentative of ma-

œuvring with the first cause, as though it were a force limited and understood. We pray with more conviction, *Deliver us from evil*, when we keep out of those blind alleys of the mind where we are constrained to look upon God as the responsible author of it. There are propositions which, brought together, form an explosive. They cannot be confined in the same head without causing an irruption. Men cannot support the thought that God is at once in the innocent man under persecution and the unjust judge who condemns him. If it be He who is the sower of bacilli and the shepherd of microbes, how shall we invoke Him against sickness and death? For my part I would rather say, "An enemy hath done this." Otherwise one is in a fair way to go mad.—What then shall I say to myself in my affliction? How calm my own soul?

THE FRIEND: Say first that a misfortune has come upon you, a great misfortune. For to lose a beloved child is a misfortune, and to attempt to deny it would be an unworthy sophism. And then recall this word of the Psalmist: Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Jehovah delivereth him out of them *all*. Invoke God against

the disorders of Nature and her brutalities. Invoke Him against death; against all the powers of destruction and discouragement. Cry: To my aid, O God! behold the enemy! Do not say, God has taken away my child. Say, rather: My child has succumbed to a dreadful malady, but neither the disease nor the death can snatch us from the hand of God or disturb our place in His plan. Then think that God is ready to strengthen you, to calm you, to give back to you in spirit what you have lost from the sight of the eyes. The misfortune which has come to you should bear fruit and contribute to your well-being. Light and strength should issue out of this darkness. Then think to yourself very simply, and with absolute certitude, this: The Father makes His own the sorrows of His children; He suffers with me, He came with me under the rod. In this way you may weep for your son, following that leading of the heart from which it is always disastrous to turn away. Know, poor father, that *The Father* understands. Remain a man. Do not violate your nature. Do not fear to offend God by your grief. Do not perform the prodigious feat of finding bitter things sweet and

misery happiness. Avoid what is inhuman and monstrous and contrary to the light which God Himself has given us and the sentiments He has made legitimately ours. Let us keep common-sense along with our faith. We need a God who offers us life, not a being coldly, implacably cruel, who crushes us without flinching, strikes us down without a tremor, and yet demands that we rejoice in our suffering. He is *The Father*. It is not said often enough; I fear it never will be. For it is not so much your misfortunes, poor, suffering humanity, as your false gods that destroy you!

THE FRIEND: If only out of love for those it has ravished from you, do not honor death by assigning it too high a place—surely not the first—in your heart and at your fireside. Ask hope to come to you, and human tenderness, with faith. Invite God to visit you, and all the friendly powers. Then those whom you weep will be with you.

PASSIVE GRIEF

THE FRIEND: There is a passive suffering that aggravates grief and contaminates it, just as a neglected wound becomes mortified. Be on your guard against it. Accept active suffering, which is suffering transformed into a moral impetus. It is not well that a sorrow should become the dominant note in a life; paralysis or dementia must result from it. Can one give over the government of the house to childish tears, even though they be not the tears of caprice? Disorder and demoralization would follow. Uncontrolled grief does irreparable damage. It must be combated like an evil. Whatever is without curb or law becomes inevitably an agent of destruction. Let us face our griefs and put them in their place.

Work is an excellent counterpoise for grief, but it does not of itself suffice. If you neglect, or suppress, or smother your heart by plunging into ceaseless activity you fail in your duty toward yourself. A grief has a right to our attention: we should give it its due, heed its lessons; but we should find an element to counterbalance it, to help maintain our equilibrium.

What strength do I not get from the remembrance of my mother's courage under her many trials! What would have become of her if she had taken to her bed with her sorrows? She would have died of melancholy. Grief without work engenders legions of harmful thoughts. It delivers us up to fears and dark presentiments that are worse than any misfortune. If need be, go work the roads, but do not stagnate in your sorrow. If the dead could speak to us they would give this counsel.

Let us honor them in our accomplishment; and let us mourn them on our feet, diligent about some worthy business.

And remember that for those who give their time up to hatreds or vanities the dead are twice dead. Every day they pass farther into oblivion. But living in fraternity, in the things of the higher life, we draw nearer to all, the living and the dead alike.

LET us prepare for that eternal meeting which our wavering faith realizes but imperfectly, by a life tending gradually toward the higher Union.

GOD alone is the whole truth. He alone possesses it in its measureless compass. As for us, we can only pray to be brought nearer and nearer to its light, as close as our eyes will bear.

THIS is a mysterious and truthful saying of Christ's: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."

That we must lose in the flesh in order to possess verily in the spirit is a grievous truth established by a thousand facts.

It is through his regret for the dear ones gone from the sight of his eyes, through the going out of his thoughts toward those he has lost, that man has drawn most of his certitude about life beyond this sensible world. Through the sacred cult of remembrance he has come to look out upon a world huge in its vastness, the existence of whose threshold even, the man immersed in the visible does not suspect.

THE CHILD AND DEATH

THE FRIEND: We should not fear to speak of death to our children while they are well, if the subject arises of itself and unavoidably; but we should accustom them to see in death a return to God, and teach them to know its liberative side rather than that aspect which inspires in men the sentiments of a slave. Happy the child who, through the discerning love of his parents, learns early so to think of death. In its rôle as one of the powers of destruction death has been given an absolutely scandalous place in human thought, religious thought included—that is, an unnatural and deformed kind of religious thought, directed away from its clarifying source. The nobler teachings of our sacred traditions ought to arm us against the fear of dying; but, alas! who knows a God that saves from death? Our God handles death as Jupiter does his thunder-bolts: it is his principal weapon. Too often have religious beliefs cultivated the fear of death, assigning it a leading place among our motives for action. Fear is a demoralizing force, a generator of craven sentiments. We poison our souls with it. If you

love us, teach us to combat the fear of death with faith in God: instead of reducing us to servitude, free us!

Nowhere else does the horrid wrong done by terrorizing souls so clearly show itself as in the critical moments of grave illness or great danger.

THE LAST HOUR

IN my last hour it shall be as God wills, if only that grace remain in me which recompenses for all else. And yet certain deaths which are beautiful make me envious. Why am I so moved reading of this poor newsboy, killed while he was crying his journal?

THE FRIEND: It is because he died at his post, in the midst of his work. He recalls the courier of Marathon who fell announcing the victory; he recalls to each of us some obscure hero or heroine toiling valiantly to the end through untold suffering. Such lives electrify us. We should all like to die in harness. But after all it doesn't matter how we die, and, even if it did, we could still have no choice. We may only ask to die peacefully and courageously, accepting the suffer-

ing and the weakness. Let us not give to the thought of death the time that life demands. Lost days make a poor pillow for slumber.

IMPRESSIONS OF EASTER

EASTER is here, the feast of renewal. For those who have kept some contact with tradition, if only through early memories, such a celebration brings its own reflections. For others, at this particular moment of the year, when in our climate the awakening of nature is seen on all sides, similar impressions come from other sources. To both classes the grave question out of which come all others, the question of life, offers itself in a guise more compelling and more insinuating than its wont.

I shall give free vent to the feelings of my heart. More than one sympathetic reader will be with me in spirit.

My heart, whether it be touched by the grace of spring or by that breath of eternity which the festival of Easter symbolizes, is specially near to those whose hope wavers or has gone out in suffering and in weeping. For many, life is a great

shadow, a long night. They move through it, not knowing whence they come or whither they go, staggering under blows whose meaning they do not understand, bleeding from wounds whose origin escapes them. And everything that brings them face to face with the fact of existence stirs in the depths of their being unutterable anguish. Life, that nightmare which each day begins anew, becomes more poignant with every springtide. What do they want with us, these buds that swell and burst, these flowers piercing the ground and opening into bloom? Bird songs wake in the wood, the air is full of the whir of wings, nests are built and made ready for the brood. And why is all this so? Is it not the same old error over again? To what end save suffering and the grave is this colossal and vain effort for being? What is behind this inconceivable attempt? The bee returning to the golden flower-cups, the sparrow gleaning among the grass broken bits to weave the house of her little ones—do they bring together aught but the proof of our irremediable end? O Life! flower and bird possess you, and know it not. If the morning smiles upon them, they do not foresee the night. “They toil not,

neither do they spin." That is much; but they think not, neither do they search, nor doubt, nor feel disquiet about their end. This is their peace. Man knows nothing like it. To him belongs the sad privilege of sums that add up to zero, of balance-sheets establishing a deficit. He has the terrible faculty of sensing active destruction, even in the seed.

He stumbles over the graves of children, over grass-grown ways once full of life and movement, over the cold marble that covers the vanquished in the struggle for justice, for mercy, for liberty. The most he knows of life is the pain of living. Those whom the spring makes melancholy have the greatest need of the Easter message. It brings joy with it, but not the joy of beings who flourish in the sunshine, in health, and prosperity. It is a joy that has its source in the crucible of pain.

EASTER is the oasis in the desert, the rose on the thorn-bush. Easter is life issuing from death, having first triumphed over it. The beast dies, but has no conception of death; man conceives it, and succeeds in turning

it into life by entering it with all his faculties. He quaffs it, savors it, exhausts its bitterness, and at last consumes it.

The just man dies, no longer constrained thereto, but willing it. Through love he gives himself, casts himself into the gulf, and lo! the gulf is filled! So it is that from death comes light. He is dead in despite of death. Let such as weep over the old-time fatality and disaster turn toward this new fact.

Only in suffering, in willing sacrifice, and in death transformed into action, does the higher life appear. Elsewhere are the rudiments; here is the finished science; elsewhere are the steps that mount toward some far-off height; here is the height itself.

“**I** AM the way, the truth, and the life.” This is equivalent to saying, I am the way of the true life. To suffer, to strive, to love, to believe; to take up the cross and bear it hopefully; to renounce self, that is to say, to renounce life for life: to sacrifice self, that it may bring forth fruit—herein is the secret, human and holy, of true living. Herein is every-

thing transformed. Instead of the outward show—transitory, already judged, hopelessly decrepit and miserable—of an existence which seems to us an impotent effort to endure and to remain, we possess ourselves of the spirit of life. The prophet of old compassed this twofold experience in a single cry:—All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the fields; . . . but the word of our God shall stand forever.

THE path to these heights is long and waste, but it is not solitary. Whoever has done something more than simply to be here and cling to existence, waiting till he should be torn away from it in spite of himself, has left along this way the best he had, to encourage those who follow. Easter is the day of all who have sown themselves like grain in the furrows of the future. There is more here than one who was dead coming forth from a tomb; there is a vast chain of life, conquered from the grave, because given in love. All the world and all human history trembles with renewed life, filtered through the deep stratum of death, where

no impure thing can pass. When this hopeless age-old existence seems to grasp you and hold you fast, it is there the ascent begins. From every halting-place, from every *impasse*, a possible way leads toward the happy issue. The life-giving spirit forms with any sort of situation, even the most desperate, a combination capable of bringing it to a definite result.

HERE are old-time superstitions, very easily explained, which have transformed "The Life to Come" into a simple continuation of what seems to their votaries the appointed human round—a round they would prolong even beyond the stars. As in olden times a man, if he were a great lord, might enter church on horseback, so they look forward to entering the banquet-halls of eternity with titles, arms, and baggage, to find hierarchies still in vogue, and to having the already ingrained satisfaction of feeling themselves first, still ahead of them. One might say in that case, "the sitting is continued." Those who have sometimes had enough of the session have ceased to think it would gain

by indefinite extension. But these are not unbelievers; they are men who have directed their experiments toward a higher end.

No, the fierce desire to keep a clutch on the things of this world, which is the inspiration of all human meanness and cruelty, could not guide us toward that higher life whose meaning appears in the more luminous moments of this one. It is a desire that leads to disenchantment, and weighs down our flight. We must learn to love life, not for its own sake, as one loves a luscious fruit, but as useful material. From the cross of Calvary and the Garden of Gethsemane we learn that life is the reward of a science which consists in knowing how to die.

If you do not learn to spell out the principles of this science you will be condemned to wishing to arrest the flight of time, to stem the torrent as it rushes onward. You will undergo day by day the torture of feeling yourself fall, without ever having the power to seize in passing the branch of safety that your hand grasped at. You will grasp smoke that will vanish, and in the teeth of your wisdom and prudent foresight every calculation you make will miscarry. From very fear of

grazing them you will run your bark on all the rocks you try to steer clear of.

Raise your eyes toward another ideal. Do not take to shelter; walk not too warily; choose the high hazard rather than the discredited way pointed out by the fear of losing your life or your chattels. Collect your forces and give yourself with all your heart! Knowing joy and freedom, you will quit the rôle of trembler, in which you are a prey to every ill-omened foreboding, and join ranks with those who have lightened baggage that they may march swiftly and untrammelled under the order: "Be not afraid, only believe."

To these belong the world and the future. Through the spirit which inspires them they see in the dark, are warm in the cold, are rich in what is beyond purchase. The victims of man's justice are for them the great conquerors, and the dead whom they love are alive.

If we could only celebrate Easter in this spirit, how the dead would arise and the granite jaws of those tombs be broken wherein we are held fast by inertia, routine, untruth, the love of what destroys us, and the time-honored formulas that

our lips still repeat, though their flame has gone out on the altar of our hearts! How our closed and blinded eyes would open to look upon that which offers peace!

Man proclaims life perishable, because his mind seizes upon the vanity within it. If he perceived the value of the passing hour, the splendor of the task ahead, the grain hidden in every human husk, the use that he might make of what he has, he would strike out the divine spark from the very stones of the highway.

Ancient vestiges of a faith forever new, faint old symbols of a mysterious hope, words of healing and of life, shake off the cerements in which time has bound you and rise up out of the ashes. In our wretchedness we need your morning radiance. You make us to remember our immortality. Bear us up in the journey toward the splendid goal in the distance.

And you, too, little flowers, that each spring-time opens, be to us the angels of good tidings. Say to those worn out in the fight that the issue will be favorable, that there will never be an end of love. Here in the shadow where we dwell be witnesses to us of the eternal stars. Bring into

darkened homes and darkened hearts the reflection of heaven's blue that dwells captive in your corollas.

MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU

FATHER, I believe in Thee, I trust Thee; stay Thou with me. I do not ask Thee to lift the veil. If always I know that Thou art there, for life or for death, what do I need beside? When I am very weary take me in Thy arms and close them round me. Give peace to those I love, and the courage to march on and to fight.

WITH THE YOUNG

WITH THE YOUNG

YOUNG AND OLD

THE FRIEND:

WHY do you look so compassionately on this young and joyful company?
—I seem to see the movements of pitiful fools.

THE FRIEND: What do you mean?

—The world is full of misery and calamities. Here, they are dying of famine; there, heroism and freedom are no match for numbers; elsewhere, massacre is rife, or the earth vomits flames upon its inhabitants. Evil passions are let loose among men and the future is dark. What have these young people to hope for? The youths will soon be sacrificed in unrighteous war; the young girls will become wives ill-treated or neglected, and mothers who, faded before the time from griefs and cares, will raise their young with

pain and difficulty. Where are they who gayly danced twenty years ago? The wheels of life have caught them and ground them down, and all their joyous folly has taken wings. Over the wall of yonder cemetery I see the crosses on graves dug all too soon. How many of you who danced in early days are lying there? It all makes me utterly sad. You do not know how I suffer as I watch this bright-eyed, careless crowd entering upon life with a confidence doomed to the worst disillusionment.

THE FRIEND: I understand you. Your pain is not imaginary, and I share it; but what then? Shall we propose to them to put on mourning in anticipation of future woe, to lie down and wait for the enemy's bullets, or for the development of the diseases whose subtle beginnings are perhaps already undermining their forces? Are we able even to tell each of these striplings to what to dedicate his future tears—whether to premature death or to a lingering, solitary old age? And suppose they should burden their hearts with the presentiment of all misfortunes united, and imagine themselves dead in advance, victims of all the epidemics, a prey to all the warring microbes;

and suppose they should see themselves in their future careers, betrayed, persecuted, slowly breaking under the stress of heartache—what good would it do them? Would the picture upon which we had invited them to look inspire them to effort? —I follow the drift of your remonstrance, but my heart contracts with sorrow before this careless joy so soon to rush over unnumbered pitfalls.

THE FRIEND: There is grief which does only harm, both to him who feels it and to others: I fear yours is of that kind. It will never prevent one of these far-away and unsuspected evils; all it can do is to destroy the peace of the present. To rejoice is an excellent thing. Your sadness is a proof of distrust toward God Himself. The tiny linnet that in spite of present dangers and future tempests and winters, sits on its eggs, feeds its little ones, and chants its loves from the fragile bough, is nearer the truth than you. The graveyard is never far away, I know, and sooner or later everything in the visible world must end there; but is it such a dreadful end of all things to fall asleep some day under the watch of God? I do not care even to speak of the luminous space on which this dark hole that is the grave opens.

The dead are not of your opinion. They are gracious toward misfortune; indulgent and clement toward laughing youth. The broken trunks lying under the moss are a part of the forest, and those who sleep are with us in heart. When fresh and ringing voices celebrate life, animation, joy, the dead chant the bass and make the harmony. Do you not love flowers?

—I delight in them. I believe they have souls. They tell us with ingenuous grace of things splendid and undreamt of. They are the little sisters of the stars, and, like their elders, they shed heavenly light along our dark ways.

THE FRIEND: But where are they lovelier than on the mossy stumps of old oaks or on crumbling walls? Do you know of anything more cheering than this contrast between nodding swarms of bell-flowers and wild pinks, and the wrecks and ruins over which they clamber? Lay aside your melancholy: the thoughts it inspires in you are of doubtful quality. If your heart is like the crumbling ruin do not forbid the springtime to open its buds there. Get into harmony with it. Do better, if you can, by becoming a convert to joy. The foolishness in this matter belongs to your

dark mood. You would be much less the fool if you went among these children. A grown-up who loves young people well enough to be young with them is a man after my own mind. If your serious affairs leave you some leisure, there is no better way of employing it. To smile at youth, under your gray locks, with the traces of sorrow on your brow, and to rejoice when it rejoices—such is the business of age as I understand it. Life is obscure; you carry about the proofs of its obscurity. But this is only one more reason for flooding its morning with light. Love well these young folk, and so far as you can, encourage them, comfort them, and illuminate them with the inner light. There is in youth a vein of hope that God Himself renews with each generation. Take care not to breathe over this gracious and fragile flower the breath of a false wisdom. You should rather light again your torch at its torch. If you know how to smile with them, they will know how to be serious with you when the hour comes to put into the heady wine of their cup a little fresh water from the well of your experience.

ON GROWING OLD

IS it not sad to grow old?

THE FRIEND: Say rather that it is a very difficult art, and one which few men have ever acquired. But where is he who understands his trade? Do the young know how to be young? the rich to be rich? Graciously to bear health is perhaps as rare as it is so to bear illness. Each one dabbles in the business of others and gives them advice.

To grow old is sad indeed, if what you want is to hold back the receding years, to keep your hair from growing white, your eyes from becoming dim, and the wrinkles from chiselling their way across your brow. But if from all these vicissitudes to which life subjects you, you draw a bit of wisdom, of profit, of goodness, to grow old is to become free and large. One of the most beautiful things in the world is an old person who, made better by experience, more indulgent, more charitable, loves mankind in spite of its wretchedness and adores youth without the slightest tendency to mimic it. Such a person

is like an old Stradivarius whose tone has become so sweet that its value is increased a hundredfold, and it seems almost to have a soul.

UNEASY FATHERS

YOUTH is right hardy, nothing escapes its revolutionary spirit. My big lads say at table the most preposterous things; it is an every-day matter to have them advance the most subversive ideas, to their own delight and my thorough discomfiture. What can I do to put an end to it?

THE FRIEND: These lordly youths have the temper of their age: see that you keep that of your own. They are hot-headed: you must be well-balanced and moderate. Why should you restrain their speech? Because they talk rank foolishness, threatening to the peace of family life and to established order? First of all, are you quite sure that their ideas are always bad? Truth itself can be offensive, and you know that it is sometimes on the lips of babes. But if all they say were foolishness, it is infinitely less dangerous said than thought and kept hidden. Keep

them from talking!—would you have them perish from suppressed confidence?

You should be very careful about quelling their exuberance. Let it have free vent under your eyes. If a bomb explodes, don't cry out. Listen and ponder. Get your wisdom in readiness to serve their inexperience when, the fireworks once let off, hours of calm reasonableness arrive. Do not attempt to assail their position on the spot, when they are transported with ardor and intoxicated with the sound of their own voices. If you do you will be overborne, like a straw in a torrent. If you have patience, and know how to detect the propitious moment, you shall cross the torrent at a ford. There is in each of these young fellows two persons: the one *a radical*, who is often apparently most disrespectful and takes pleasure in questioning whatever is accepted, and contesting all recognized authority; the other, *a disciple*, full of deference, who asks nothing better than to follow a master. The radical is a disturber of the peace, but he is necessary. His function is to prevent the young from becoming the chattels of the old. His bombs sometimes break windows, but such misdeeds give us better

air to breathe. Let him accomplish his mission. Watch him playing his part, ready to do battle for whatever he presents as true. It is the best fashion of contending against that which is false and abnormal. Let him have full liberty to unpack his arsenal, to expose its contents to the noontide, to that good light of day in which everything takes true form and proper place. So we shall keep his confidence in us, which he would lose if we rebuffed him and tyrannized over him. What is more, our cordial fashion of treating the radical will keep intact the good-will of the disciple, a precious ally in his place, but faithful comrade of the other, whose exile and disgrace he is ever ready to share.

THE MOTHER'S SIDE

OUR daughters want to discuss everything with us. It was different in our time; we had more respect for our parents. How can we avoid these painful clashes of opinion, this hasty exchange of words that one afterward regrets, if only because it disturbs the family quiet and destroys good understanding?

THE FRIEND: It takes at least two to make an argument. The dispute begins when the daughter replies to the mother by advancing a different opinion. The mother thinks this is wrong, and says so, and endeavors to lead her daughter upon her own ground. The daughter defends her position, and there is no end in sight.

—And yet one must not leave the last word to an inexperienced child.

THE FRIEND: To have the last word is the most passionate desire of youth. In fact it is a mark of childishness. We should make no account of it, but try to set them a different example. Let them have the last word, but let this word be at the beginning of the discussion. Set clearly forth your own idea, so that there shall be no misunderstanding. This done, you may set your mind at rest. Useless words always make mischief.

—Then the child has the better of it.

THE FRIEND: Not if we know how to be firm. One word to the point, backed by an unruffled spirit and calm resolution, is worth more than a flood of words, hasty and vehement, whose intended meaning, however true, becomes disfigured and distorted in the heat of discussion. You

spoke just now of other times, of our own mothers. Formerly mothers were more serene, and by this very difference their ascendancy was surer. Resistance on the part of their children made them suffer, but they kept cool, and did not condescend to dispute with them. Their method was preferable to ours. Children should be allowed to make their ideas known; we should listen, meditate upon their objections, and draw fair conclusions: but we should never measure ourselves with them in words; if we do they will prove the stronger, since they are the less hampered with reason. Discussion cultivates obstinacy. When we dispute we run the risk of uttering sentiments that are mixed up with our own personal prejudices. If we reflect and say nothing, the opposing ideas have a better chance of meeting at a common point later on.

A PROPHET OF JOY

THE FRIEND: True joy is a great liberator, a marvellous alembic wherein all impurity is eliminated. But its secret is concealed from us as surely as are the riddles of the universe. Our

hearts are like silent harps. What we need is a prophet of true joy. I picture him to myself as old, his face seamed with the scars of life, his heart torn by the thorns of the way wherein he met its rude encounters. His joy would not be the joy of life's morning, pure and sparkling because it has as yet known no storms; it would be an inner serenity, proved in the crucible, something like the golden glow on beautiful evenings after the heat of the day. His smile, unlike that of a man of a complacent mood, could not be read as a return of thanks to the kindly fates that had tossed him the coin of privilege in passing; it would be a sign of spiritual victory over the powers that oppress. Such a man would be comforting, encouraging, beneficent for all. He would re-illumine in each one the poor, snuffed-out, and smoking torch of joy. From the most intricate destinies he would unravel a luminous meaning. He would teach youth a virile joy, the joy of brave and militant hearts, freed from unworthy fears and the love of unworthy pleasures. He would give them somewhat of his own aspiration, his own force, his own indomitable energy, and his own faith, gentle as a child's. Under his

fingers the human soul would vibrate unknown chords, golden and crystalline, that would sound for us the song of unfathomed love and deathless hope.

GIRD UP THY LOINS!

Man is very small and very great. He is great to Godward, on the side of his destiny ; and here he knows nothing of himself, sets himself at naught. He is small on his own side, in his rôle, his stage glory ; and it is here that he takes himself most seriously. He is as the fool who chose to live in the kennel of his own castle.

GIRD UP THY LOINS !

RUST!

THE FRIEND:

IRON rusts and furniture becomes covered with dust. Whoever has a piece of apparatus, a delicate instrument, or a marble to care for must fear this slow invasion of oxides and dust.

There are spiritual as well as material oxides. Rust lies in wait for the entire man. The limbs are subject to ankylosis, the mind to routine, the will to an imperceptible enfeebling of its powers. No one is safe unless he is constantly on guard. We must rouse ourselves, furbish up our accoutrements and exercise our faculties. Man can never flatter himself with being equipped for more than one day at a time. On the morrow he must begin

all over again. If indolence has charms for him, so much the worse; it is the forerunner of all decadence. If I did not sound the alarm to your laggard will, I should be your enemy.

Consider the men who are neglectful of themselves, the peoples that rest on their laurels, the churches that rest on their doctrines. Their death-sentence is written by the finger of destiny in the dust that covers them. The future is to the valorous who let no breath dim the shining surface of their armor.

Relax not your vigilance, my son! Every hand that bestirs you is the hand of a friend. Death to indolence! Death to rust!

GOOD-HUMOR

THE FRIEND: The bad humor into which things plunge us is a proof of their victory over us. They force us to wear the gray garb of convicts.

Preserve your good-humor. It is a signal of defeat for all the enemies of the soul. It is homage rendered God from the midst of uncertainties. It is among the highest and purest acts of faith.

CHAINS

O H! these chains!

THE FRIEND: Plunge them into the fire, into the quenchless fire of love. Forge them with a lusty hammer on the anvil of patience. So shall your chains become arms. What was a shackle shall become a force.

OFF GUARD

THE FRIEND: Our defencelessness in the face of sorrow, and our lack of power to resist the seduction of pleasure, both arise from the same weakness. Yesterday you were drowned in grief; to-day, the intoxication of the senses transports you. On the surface all is changed, and you are no longer what you were. And yet you have only changed masters. Under your new livery beats your old heart of a slave.

BE PREPARED!

THE FRIEND: Be ever ready! The unexpected is on your track. Meet it under arms, and if it overtakes you give it for countersign the words:

Here am I! Your chief concern is not to be happy or unhappy, well or ill, but always ready. Opportunity should never knock at your door to find it bolted. Through the changeful phases of life we are the executors of a will that is greater than our will, and that by this very fact sustains us. Give yourselves, with a good heart, to its service, and let it work through you. Keep your powder dry and your sword burnished!

THE HIGH HAZARD

THE FRIEND: Fear hinders us from knowing happiness, for it is in the very undertakings it discourages that the fine and strong emotions of great-hearted men are developed. What a beautiful, sane, and emancipated life it is to move on calmly in portentous times, occupied solely with the care of making for the goal. How many humiliating miseries does that spirit escape which knows how to accept manfully the high hazard!

FEAR

IF I might have a wish I would ask that fear be taken from me, and that peace reign in my heart.

THE FRIEND: You could wish for nothing better or rarer.

That false security which sleeps with both ears under cover, and fancies itself in possession of "the price of peace," is common enough. The majority of men are satisfied with that which has only the appearance of surety. They never know that peace of heart which comes from the assurance that one may confide in the will which is at the foundation of things, and accord it boundless credit. From this fundamental distrust, that great misfortune fear is born. Fear is the queen of evils. Death has been called the king of terrors, but without the terror where would the king be? All his royalty comes from fear. And it is from fear, too, that man's tyranny holds its power, and that unhappiness, calamity, in fact, all evil menaces us.

Menace lives on bold borrowings; fear is its

silent partner. If the lender shut his strong-box, menace is no better than a worthless check.

Most men are the slaves of fear. If they were only conscious of their slavery they might win their liberty, but unfortunately they are so eaten up with fear as to be no longer even sensible of their thraldom.

I have sometimes tried to draw a parallel between the fears of a savage and those of civilized man. Such a comparison should throw light on what we call *progress*. The savage has certain rudimentary fears. Beasts of prey dispute with him the freedom of the forest, he has to fear their depredations. Other savages covet his game, his weapons, his wife, the bear's skin that protects him from the cold. Tempest, lightning, flood, and frost he may well dread. Nevertheless, all told, the savage who, like the birds, is always on guard, with ear alert and eye watchful, like the birds also, knows peace and tranquillity of mind. His fears, which are simple in nature, are likewise small in number.

The civilized man, on the other hand, with his extraordinary means of guaranty, protection, shelter, should be more reposeful in mind than the

savage. So many laws watch over him, so many institutions uphold his rights. In comparison with the lot of the savage, he enjoys exceptional privileges: in his place the savage would be entirely reassured. And yet the civilized man's fears are more numerous as well as more refined than those of his ancestor of the forest.

If he is rich, what hasn't he to dread? In vain he locks up his deeds; an income will diminish inside a strong-box without a hand opening it. To-day, you shut up a fortune in it. To-morrow, because some speculators have conspired at the ends of the earth, you take out worthless paper. The civilized man, if he is conservative, is delivered over to a nightmare of terrors. He trembles for the present social order, which he sees bombarded on all sides. In what tranquil retreat can he hide himself?—the innovators are everywhere! He fears the fall of the venerable edifice of the creeds upon the unsubstantial roofs of human institutions whose ramshackle shelters cover walls full of breaches and lizards. That fear of the skies' falling, which our Gaelic forefathers found so foolish, he experiences and drains to the dregs. He fears to see the heavens depart as a

scroll rolled together, the stars pale and fall into chaos with the dead gods.

The civilized man senses danger from so far that he makes himself miserable about catastrophes to happen after his death, if not after the disappearance of the human race. He feels the torture of one who sees the sun grow cold, the earth lose its fruitfulness, the mines give up all their coal from their heart. He has learned so many things that his knowledge tracks and pursues him like hounds on the scent. In each drop of water myriads of microbes lie in wait for him; he breathes them, he eats them, he drinks them, he nourishes them with his blood. True, he makes war on them with antiseptics, but he knows only too well that this affords but imperfect protection. One cannot close the gates on an enemy for which the least little fissure is a national highway and a microscopic corner a vast continent.

Does the civilized man cultivate letters? During his studies he fears the examination. Afterward, he trembles before his superiors. Who can measure the terrors of a subordinate in office, his fear to displease this man or that, to satisfy both of whom, of course, is impossible, since their re-

quirements are contrary? Looked at in one way, civilization is the hotbed of disquiet and agitation and unrest. There is no more repose or respite for anybody. Wherever she reigns mistress there is no longer day or night. She obscures the sunlight by her smoke, her buildings, and her dust. She profanes the night with her lighting apparatus. From all this there results a somnambulistic sort of mentality, confused, impatient, fearful, excited to the limit, and disordered still further by the use of strong liquors, the reading of sensational literature, and the incessant appeal to the passions made by the exploiters and leaders of opinion. As for these last, they know their public, and know, too, that it could never get along without the fears that consume it. Like children at night, clamoring for their nurses to tell them ghost stories which are going to keep them from sleep, we call for our newspapers to frighten us. It is by fear, under one form or another, that each party seeks to gain its ends. Individuals, too, fear one another and attribute to one another the darkest designs. In the obscurity favorable to foolish imaginings everybody appears to everybody else a monster. Our

politics are the politics of fear. Our morality has no more powerful spring. Fear is also the key-stone of religion. The agitation of spectres in various toggery is the method of most of those who appeal to the people to convert them or to make them better. So our progress in *terror* is incessant. We have mounted so high in the art of inducing and feeling fear that the moment has come when we may hope to descend.

How convert ourselves from fear? Shall we imitate the savage? We should lose our time in regrets for what can never come back to us. But have we no other means for recovering the peace of the heart? Yes, for to recognize an evil is to have taken a step toward some day being delivered from it. Let us try to gain confidence and serenity. Fear deceives itself and us. To be afraid is to be wrong. Our wisdom, made up of innumerable fears, merits rather the name of folly, based as it is on the belief in a universe delivered over to chance and anarchy. He is the wise man who among all the voices that reach his ears comes gradually to distinguish those which say to him, *fear nothing*; for truth should always be reassuring. The flower that opens in peace, the

bird that sings its song, the star that follows its course, the man who follows his conscience, are in accord with the source of being and repose in it. Peace envelops them and by them is communicated to him who knows how to understand their significance.

To flee that which increases fear, to search for that which brings forth and nourishes a lofty confidence—this is the rule for him to follow who is weary of trembling.

VEXATIONS

THE FRIEND: We should not complain of trials and vexations; it is the unpleasant things that educate us. Doubtless a regular and easy life would be the best condition for progress, had not man need of being roused to action; but the natures that can get on without a spur are rare. We may question whether they exist.

That which pushes us ahead almost always has its source without. The inward force is unquestionably the more important, but will it operate without a preliminary contraction and expansion? The most energetic action is often reaction, and

we owe a great part of the conquests we make to the necessities that do us violence.

More than one man, reviewing his life, has said to himself—how much precious leisure have I had at various times, and what indifferent use did I make of it!

We work not because we have the time to work, but because life constrains us to it. An able man, forced to action, will do more in his leisure hours than a man of leisure in his whole day. Activity once aroused has a tendency to increase, one enterprise provokes and sustains another; but when life is all leisure there is never time for anything. It is good to battle, to suffer, to be thrown overboard and left to save ourselves. What we so lose in comfort we gain in energy, and energy is the most precious of man's weapons.

SLAVERY

I AM quite willing to struggle, but why these shackles? I am ready to climb the steep, but let this burden be taken from my shoulders.

THE FRIEND: You would not be a man if you

did not experience this desire, but would you be like other men if it were fulfilled? Burdens, great and small, have an accidental character in life, but the accident, by its regular recurrence, approaches the permanent. Who, pray, is exempt from servitude? When great troubles depart from us, little miseries take their place. We pass our time in changing burdens. Demand of each of them its secret. Do not detain them needlessly, but profit by them in their passage. If they come to stay, make them tractable and turn them to some service. Let them cultivate your mind or shine your shoes, according to their capabilities.

It takes embarrassments to initiate us into life, and above all to make us understand the embarrassments of others. Every yoke is a revelation to him who bears it worthily. All misery, high or low, is a messenger to tell us of our brothers whose misery is the same as ours. It offers us the key to some mystery: let us profit by the key. Open the closed door with it. What you learn will be the prize for what you have suffered. Do not pity yourself for being tied down to vulgar duties unworthy of a man of parts, for having to attend to annoying details, or listen to the chatter

of idle persons. If you are forced to sweep the street every morning, sweep heartily, and fraternize with those who sweep beside you. It shall be your morning prayer, your *sursum corda* of brotherhood. Afterward, when occasion comes for talking with your friends or taking up your pen, your thought will have that stamp of authenticity which is conferred by direct experience, and by nothing else. It is to the broom that you will owe it.

DISCONTENT

I AM discontented, passed master of discontent.

THE FRIEND: Do you know why? For if you do, it is only half an evil. There are nice distinctions in the bad. The worst discontent is that which is ignorant of its cause.

—I'm not so bad as that. I know right well why I am discontented, and you will see that I have abundant reason. I gave warnings, they were not heard; I signalled danger, it was rushed into; I gave excellent advice to the young, which would have kept them out of snares; my counsels were disdained.

And now everything I feared has come to pass. It is a sad thing to preach to the deaf, to display evidence before the blind. When I reflect that all they have brought upon themselves in their folly might have been avoided, I am indignant.

And who is to suffer the consequence? Why, I am! As surely as they scorned my advice, so surely do they now count on me. They plunged into the water with premeditation, almost deriding me when I cried danger: now that they are drowning they call me to the rescue. And must I plunge in after them—after people of that sort?

THE FRIEND: I admit that you have good reason for discontent. Nevertheless you may be wrong.

—I think it would be hard to prove it.

THE FRIEND: And yet it is simple. There may be excellent reasons for doing a thing, and still better ones for not doing it. Your discontent is justifiable—could not be more so. What has happened is simply disgusting. But here, as under all circumstances, the rule to follow is this—do the best you can.

In the present case, is your just indignation the most useful thing you can offer, and will the

greatest good come of it of which you are capable under the circumstances?

—That is a question I haven't asked myself. But I believe we have a right to feel indignation. It is a relief.

THE FRIEND: Beyond question. And you have full liberty to exercise this right; so much cannot be disputed. But to renounce it might be more worthy of you than to use it. First of all, does discontent make you happy? Is it a state of mind whose charms are worth succumbing to?

—By no means. When I am discontented I am unhappy. Everything seems to be out of tune; every face looks awry. Moreover, I am disgusted generally, and feel that I never want to undertake anything again.

THE FRIEND: That's an abominable state of mind; why inflict it on yourself?

—It is too much for me.

THE FRIEND: So I see. But however irresistible these movements within us prove themselves should we not at least hate them for the harm they do us? And why yield to them so complacently if they surprise us?

—Perhaps you would have me content.

THE FRIEND: How could you be, without falsehood? Be frank, above all things. I simply wish to preserve you from the danger of submersion. A black tide mounts against your spirit. An assault is planned against your good will. The enemy gets in under shelter of a just indignation. Be on guard! Close in the ranks of all the friendly powers. Raise your eyes to the heights. Think of things that give you heart. Get out of this atmosphere where, if you stay, you will stifle.

And if evils that you foresaw have come, if grave mistakes have been made by people duly warned, try to make good the damage, even though it has come through scorn of your advice. Don't go about repeating these words of narrow wisdom: "I told you so!" Keep from such commonplaces. If the havoc is reparable, repair it; if not, regret it, but without bitterness. Go about your business manfully, and don't lose time in fuming. If they have made a mess of things, do you go quietly about some matter for the future: plant a tree, sow a seed. That is worth more than the most magisterial discontent.

Above all, may God preserve you from becom-

ing a professional malcontent: such people are pests.

And if you must be discontented from time to time, to keep that faculty of the soul in working order, be discontented with yourself. That at least may have its good side, if only you do not make it your daily bread.

RESIGNATION

WHAT is the right way to feel about resignation?

THE FRIEND: Let us consider the subject. If we mean by this word a disposition to passivity, an inclination to endure everything, I should like to warn you against it as a vice. To determine in advance upon submission, upon an acceptance of whatever events may choose to impose or the will of men decree, is not worthy of us. Are you a tool in the hands of another, dough for him to mould according to his whim? No, you are somebody, and you ought to count. Even in passing over you, superior forces are conscious that you are there—they have not the power to annihilate you. Then be what you are,

a sentient energy, feeling yourself bound to act for the right. Guard with care that passion for the better which dwells within you. Dare affirm what you love, what you know to be honest. Do not fear to speak your convictions, and, if necessary, to cry them aloud. Know that in some hours to resign one's self to silence is a coward's part. Rouse yourself to rebellion, and, if the oppression increases, let your resistance increase with it openly.

Resignation has been wronged by those who mask under its name indolence of mind, indifference, the love of peace at any price, a perpetual capitulation before obstacles and threats, the passive humor which never resents being called good-nature. This is all falsehood, to excuse souls without stamina, and to leave an open road for tyranny. An end to such resignation! it is often —oh, the irony of it!—nothing else than resignation to the sufferings of others. There should be cried from the house-tops an insurrection of the mind against all unfriendly powers. We should never be content with the *status quo*, under pretext that it is peace, order, respected conventionality; for it is a lap of luxury to the satisfied and

a crown of thorns for the oppressed. Resignation to the *status quo* is injustice perpetuated, rights converted into ordinances, social iniquity raised to the place of social order, old errors made sacred in formulas and imposed as truths.

Who dares affirm that Christianity teaches such a resignation? He who does is far from being a follower of its founder.. Jesus was an ever-ready antagonist, a bow always strung, indomitable, fired with a great hope of some day vanquishing the evil and transforming the earth into the Kingdom of God. He Himself compared His spirit to leaven, to the most active and energetic force in the world, never at rest till it has leavened the lump. And His spirit never made a compromise with anybody or anything. Inviolable, incorruptible, He did not lower His sublime ideal to the level of the egoisms and pretensions of a world resigned to its own meanness. No effort seemed to Him too great, no combat too rude; no suffering ever made Him flinch. Since His entrance into history He has had a part in all the uprisings for liberty, fraternity, and light. The good has always been accomplished by those who could not resign themselves to a state of things

offensive to their conscience. Let us be found among their number.

They are the only people who understand true resignation. Let us see in what it consists. It consists in accepting the conditions of life and making the best of them. The rebellious do not accept life; they curse and revile it, and pass their time in recriminations. They lose life as well as the too resigned.

True resignation takes life as it is for its inevitable point of departure, but begins forthwith to transform it. I would compare existence, with its sufferings and difficulties, to a field in need of clearing. The passive man lies down in it. The rebellious rage to and fro. The rest of us accept it—to expect another would be a vain delusion—but we attack it at once with pick and plough.

—And yet, are there not things we cannot change? The death of those we love, for example.

THE FRIEND: No. These facts do not exist. Even death is transformable. Every calamity, every pain, every bereavement is an unploughed field. That which in your darkened mind you call fatality is ground to cultivate. Our hope of

overcoming has no limits. Everything depends upon the form it takes in the mind. Even death may there be transformed into life, and fatality may become an element of freedom. We must labor.

See this rock, bare, arid; it nourishes no life. But to-morrow, thanks to a spore brought by the wind, a lichen, almost microscopic, grows upon it. In its dust some moss, taking root, lives on the air and the rain and the particles the rock gives up to it. After the moss, a grain springs up, and vegetations die, one above another, leaving after them that which shall nourish new ones. Some day a forest will rise from this rock; the plants will have created the earth. This is what man does with fatality. Not a stone but nourishes him in the end.

Then let us resign ourselves to the rigor of the soil, to the rain and the wind; but let us till, till always, till everywhere, and even the desert shall blossom as the rose.

GOD'S WILL

HAPPY is he who can say with simplicity,
“Thy will be done!”

THE FRIEND: Yes, for he rests in the eternal, and the agitations of the passing days no longer trouble his peace. He has anchored to the rock. However, let us take care not to deceive ourselves. To some people it is whatsoever is that is the will of God. It is enough that a thing happens for them to see in it His finger. He has willed it, at least He has permitted it, otherwise it would not be. Here is enough to bring us to stagnation, to immorality, to horrible doubts. But there is no denying that the reasoning is simple and apparently irrefutable. It must be judged rather by its fruits.

A country governs itself through the co-operation of its citizens, and enjoys perfect liberty. Backed by a conspiracy, a tyrant undertakes the overthrow of its native institutions. If the citizens are on guard, his project falls through; but if it happens, on the contrary, to succeed, will this new government be legitimate from the fact of its having tried usurpation successfully? Could

one justly apply to it this saying, so easy to exploit—*All authority comes from God?* Yesterday it was the duty of all honest men to resist it, to-day they must acclaim its victories. What upright conscience does not rise against such pretensions? It is time to follow conscience and oppose them.

You have built you a house by dint of economy, and live there in peace with your children. The fire of heaven falls on it and consumes it; what will you do?

There are countries where such dwellings are never rebuilt; not because their site has once proved dangerous, but because the fire of heaven seems a direct manifestation of the divine will. To raise again what it has struck down seems an act of revolt against God.

When Franklin conceived the lightning-rod his invention was viewed askance in certain religious quarters. Was not this man attempting to wrest from God one of His principal weapons of chastisement? Following out this reasoning, whose form is far from being absurd or impious, we should be forced to consider as sacrilege the watering of gardens or the irrigation of fields. If it pleases God to refuse rain to the earth, by what

right do you make good the deprivation through your industry?

In the same class of ideas, to drain a marsh, pierce a tunnel, turn aside the course of a river, are all infractions of the divine order.

Some people use no medicine and disapprove of the physician's art. Others have their sick treated, but, if they die, see in their death an accomplishment of the will of God. If such is the case, why do you nurse the sick at all? Is it not a fashion of impeding the divine will? If that will is that they be healed, they will be, even without care; if that will is that they die, all your care will come to naught. What objections can be made to this reasoning? Absolutely none. Why, then, has it never prevailed, even among men most resigned to the will of God? Because, while it may seem to be just, it is in reality sacrilegious. No one will succeed in raising fatalism to a rule of life. If such theories are true, why, pray, have you either will or intelligence?

It is the will of God that the good shall prevail. For us this is salvation. Here you have absolute truth. But it is a perilous undertaking to try to interpret this will in detail and to use

your own finger to point out the finger of God. Grave error and cruel injustice result inevitably from such pretension. It is especially hateful when exercised upon the destiny of others. To say that God has smitten this man, chastised that nation; to interpret the divine intentions hidden behind the events of history, as journalists interpret the will of sovereigns and statesmen through what appears in their measures—what a work of pride and folly on the part of the creature! How well the prophet spoke who put into the mouth of God this declaration, so significant of man's humility—"My thoughts are not your thoughts."—According to this we are absolutely incapable of knowing the will of God.

THE FRIEND: Not so, but He has charged nobody with explaining to us His plan in detail. The key to the world and to human destiny is too colossal for man to lift. Is it not enough to know that God makes all things work together for our good, even the evil our enemies do us contrary to His will? It is given to no one to step outside of the universe and to organize a creation within creation. The poet says, "Even the freest bird is caged within a climate."

The most wicked of men, the one in most absolute revolt against humanity and against God, lives and dies in the bosom of the eternal laws. He succeeds in contributing to the equilibrium which he tries to destroy, just as the liar by his craft only gathers fagots for the day of enlightenment. Yet none could permit himself to say that the liar lies in the service of God and by His decree. No, he lies on his own account; but in spite of himself he falls upon an addition which results in his own downfall and the triumph of the truth.

—Sum up, then, my proper line of conduct.

THE FRIEND: Here it is. You are a cabin-boy on board a vast ship, of whose very dimensions you are ignorant. But you have your orders to execute at your post. Act, under all circumstances, according to the best light you have, and loyally. Then you will surely be in the line pointed out by Him at the helm. The ship is stanch, the Captain good. You may trust them. No real evil can happen to you or yours. The rudest storm-burst is but an incident of the passage. The *will* which guides us, and against which nothing shall prevail, is *that not one of us should perish*. Even

the hairs of our head are numbered. Labor and strive in the sweat of your brow, and then lean on the Eternal. And if sometimes you must say with tears, Thy will be done, because you are wounded and your heart is torn, you will not say it as one overcome by grief and resigned to its domination, but as the vanquished of to-day, sure of future victory.

PRAYER

O GOD, my Father, save me from this blind riddle of fatality! Let not my soul wear itself out in its strife against the incomprehensible, the incoherent, the brutal, the injustice of man and of things. Fill my heart with the light that shows me Thy face. Give me Thy peace, though I struggle in chaos. Make me know that discord is in my ears alone, confusion in the smallness of my vision. Higher up, the harmony appears. Save me from the disorder of my thought.

THE MASTERY OF IMPRESSIONS

THE FRIEND: One of your misfortunes is to identify yourself completely with the impression of the moment.

—Is not that rather a source of strength, and does not sincerity demand it?

THE FRIEND: There is no question but what it is a sign of strength to vibrate with every contact and to render faithfully and vigorously the impressions you get: it is one of the conditions of healthy life. Only those who feel deeply and express their feeling with whole-souled directness have force and are able to communicate it.

—Then what would you have of me? When I weep, I do not hide my tears; when I laugh, I laugh heartily. I do not offer sympathy in whispers, or show indignation in gloves. You find fault with this? Such a judgment surprises me. Did I not learn from you to speak without dissimulation, to do everything in the light of day? Would you approve of me unless I offered myself zealously and as I am? if I hid myself in reserves and half-tones and hesitations? Would you clasp

my hand if I offered it with the air of half withholding it?

THE FRIEND: We are quite of a mind there. I do not ask you to dissemble. I merely ask you to keep yourself in hand. If you are the slave of your impressions, even your sincerity may harm you. We should certainly neither ignore our impressions nor do what we do as though we did it not. This would be unnatural, not sane and right. But it is quite another thing to be one with each passing notion, to give ourselves over to it completely. If you would be just to your fellows, govern your impressions, be master of yourself. Remember that you are prone to error; remember it especially if the impression you get brings with it an unfavorable judgment. Has not experience taught you that contrary opinions often follow one another? Nothing else has such mobility as impressions, especially where they are vivid. What result should you expect from abandoning yourself by turns and without restraint or limit to contradictory sentiments? It would be altogether incoherent, and what you call sincerity would have served but to make you an enigma to others. Control yourself, reflect, don't go head-

long into things; that is to be wanting in sincerity no less than in wisdom. A trifling distrust of one's self is part of the one as of the other. But I confess that I was thinking of none of these things when I offered my friendly criticism. It was your reply that led to these reflections. What concerns me with reference to the vividness of your impressions is this: You follow all too easily the dark suggestions of life and events; before the sad and deplorable facts that confront you your sight grows troubled. A cold, dark mist enters your soul, and it seems to you that all is lost because the sun is hidden and the familiar outlines of things are changed. Confused, undone, you suffer a nameless martyrdom. The cloud above you threatens to extinguish your hope. This is all wrong, and must be remedied. Learn to control your impressions, to keep them in place. Shall all the light God has revealed to you be blotted out by an hour of eclipse? Will you give such credit to your impressions that it suffices for the last one to be dark, to destroy all the rest? Shall your soul be as the surface of water, that shows only the wake of the last ship? You should not suffer this, but aspire to something better.

—You say this to me? I already suffer cruelly from this ascendancy of passing moods. Every clear-cut reality makes its impression so deep on the sensitive ground of my being that for an hour I am conscious of nothing else. And in an hour one may commit a foolish deed, surrender to despair, neglect a duty, or give way to a weakness. There are days when I feel the world crumbling round me. As the messengers of evil followed one another before the face of Job, so unhappy experiences, erroneous opinions, events wherein the wrong triumphs, knock successively at the doors of my soul, and in no time I am a prey to their evil tidings. It is a malady. Though in the midst of practical difficulties I often seem to be encouraged and sustained in proportion to their greatness, to the same degree inversely I find myself gradually growing more and more powerless to react against this disposition toward pessimism. I have come to think of men of equable mind as heroes.

THE FRIEND: They are not always heroes. Sometimes they are merely thick-skinned. You cannot have their disposition, or change your own. First understand yourself better, then rely more

upon God. Remember that if your impressions of the moment are dark, their value is only relative, and that it is very limited. Do not let them blot out the sun. They are only fragments of fog-clouds trailing by. The darkness you see is but a mote in the infinite sunshine.

LISTEN NOT TO THINE OWN COUNSEL

P REOCCUPATION with self becomes in the end a slavery. The cultivation of self, which is the cultivation of our vulnerable surface, complicates both living and dying. To be free from self is to live really, live largely, capable of enjoying all things, because dependent upon none. Heavens! what an encumbrance is that personage, "Myself,"—to us even more than to others! *Erlöse uns von dem Selbstübel!*

Know thyself, but hearken not to thyself! Go ahead, and consult not thy liking! Monsieur is not disposed? Let him go on just the same. The disposition will come as he proceeds.

MECHANICAL CONFESION

THE FRIEND: I consider these formulas wherein one accuses himself wholesale of all imaginable sins, to be dangerous to the inner life.

—Why? May we not hope to profit by this painful retrospect of our moral misery?

THE FRIEND: If it is a true retrospect, yes. Yet even so, nothing must be exaggerated. The accent must be put on the side of encouragement. We should lift man by inspiring confidence in his higher self, and not plunge him again and again into his uncleanness, on the pretext of sanctifying him.

Let us take our lesson from Jesus. He knew our errors; but His methods were more optimistic. When He says “go, and sin no more,” we feel that He believes us capable of it.

But these plenary avowals inspire me with only moderate confidence. With a little practice you come to repeat them without quitting the comfortable attitude of the soul of a just man hardened.

If, to these devotees of all-around confession, proclaiming themselves, in theory, monsters be-

fore God, you point out a practical defect, a fresh stain, see how they will receive you. It is a fact of common observation that the people among whom the general corruption of humanity is most readily admitted and taught, are also the most sensitive when there is question of acknowledging a simple error, a fault, a mere peccadillo. Humility does not consist in accusing one's self of the gravest generalities, but in acknowledging one's little delinquencies. In this case I fear that the general does wrong to the specific.

THE CRITERION

THE FRIEND: Do not conclude that a man is modest because he lowers his eyes before eulogy: nothing is more common, easier, or more fallacious.

Observe, rather, whether he holds his head high before just criticism. You might apply the rule to yourself. How do you bear blame? This is the key to the whole matter. The people whose modesty stands the test are rare.

SURPRISES

LIFE surprises us at every turn. In the ardor of action, in the quick succession of events, one finds that he has said or done things not justified by the best recognized principles. What a humiliation! I am shame-faced at the thought.

THE FRIEND: You would be wrong if you took these inconsistencies lightly. Nothing is more humiliating than to find our spontaneous movements conflicting with our ideal. To make up our minds to be moderate, equable, broad-minded, free from petty vanities, and then to surprise ourselves in the act of injustice, intolerance, vulgar egotism or sensuality, is painful testimony to our weakness. To aspire to a life noble and true, and yet to feel ourselves hopelessly intractable —how can we be resigned to this without abdication?

The pain which we experience seems to me justifiable. Up to a certain point it does us honor. But it must be real sorrow at being found wanting, unjust, weak, or wicked, and not

wounded pride. The best sentiments are exposed to the worst counterfeits.

But even so, do not abandon yourself to grief over your sins. You should smart under this grief, not habituate yourself to it. A lingering remorse is a further victory for evil. Accept yourself as you are, and go bravely about bettering yourself—then your very lapses become a force, and to have erred may serve as an enlightenment.

A good conscience is an aid to peaceful sleep, and nothing is more desirable. But if the consciousness of having failed keeps us awake, pricks us to better deeds, fires us with the wish to repair and compensate, is not that good also?

The faults which teach us how to live are preferable to a sterile uprightness full of self-satisfaction.

SIMPLICITY

Hid from the wise and prudent, revealed unto babes.

I LOVE simplicity.

THE FRIEND: You are a thousand times right: it is the treasure of treasures. But be on guard against its imitations! The humble are often eaten up with pride, and the trickery of the simple sometimes outwits the most prudent. Even in what one might call the simple walks of life nothing is so rare as genuine simplicity.
—Why should the pure spring nourish a poisonous plant and shelter a noisome reptile under its crystal waters?

THE FRIEND: This is life. The intensest light causes the blackest shadow. You remember Christ's saying about the things hidden from the wise and revealed unto babes. A false simplicity may transform this splendid and truthful declaration into a source of error and imposture.
—How, pray?

THE FRIEND: Behind such a statement misunderstood, the pretensions of ignorance defy knowledge, and gross superstition laughs at authentic faith. There are circumstances in which those

who have learned nothing have more assurance than those who have taken the pains to study. Though such a pretension appears crazy, not only has it always existed,—it has a fast hold on life, and unbounded credit. We hear men talk of the bankruptcy of Science. Ignorance is proof to all such suggestions. Her affairs are always flourishing.

We shall always see the charlatan and the quack making pretensions in the face of medical science, men with no idea of the origin and composition of the Bible defying those who have toiled piously over the questions of criticism. Incompetence in any matter gives a confident carriage unknown to discreet and modest learning. And if reserve and the fear of making errors are a sign of weakness in the eyes of the crowd, self-sufficiency is its symbol of power.

Hidden from the wise, revealed to babes! An odious parody of this thought is furnished daily wherever children think themselves wiser than their elders. Recall the authoritative speech of certain young people at table, and how their parents listen, mute with admiration if affection blinds them, dismayed if their sight is clear.

—Heaven preserve us from such simplicity of mind and from such children! Are these men simple? These others children? On the contrary, they are all vainglorious, puffed up with puerile pretensions.

The experienced and competent man of patient research, a questioner of facts, who gives his life to informing himself, is the truly humble person. He never pretends to have a special gift of knowledge. And it is from knowing how to become a child again, from recognizing his ignorance, from diligence in patient labor, that he has been able to lift a corner of the veil and learn something.

THE FRIEND: None the less there remains truth of the first order in this saying: Hidden from the wise and prudent, revealed to babes. First, there is a disposition of mind which does not admit of profit or enlightenment. This I should call the closed mind. In this category are all those, however clear-sighted and intelligent, who are men of systems and creeds, sectarians beset with party spirit and prejudice. They have nothing to learn; they know it all. They do not search for truth, they possess it;

they are its authorized trustees: they offer it, export it, but no longer import it. They only are the true, the pure, the believing, the intelligent. Therefore nothing can enter their minds hereafter. Obdurate, incorrigible, incapable of amending or of retrieving their errors, they perish armed in the triple mail of their self-sufficiency. All arbitrary claims of authority, all religions and philosophic dogmatisms, are here included. They are the despair of whoever toils to establish any good thing outside of the officially recognized. Every pioneer of the future finds them in his way. There is no exaggerated pessimism in this comparison, however sharply its rigor gives us pause: "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Have not the promoters of fresh scientific ideas established the fact—and tintured with what bitterness—that minds as yet untrained are more accessible to new truths than those occupied, encumbered, glutted with fixed ideas?

To escape this danger requires strict daily self-examination. It is the danger of dying in poverty from overestimating our wealth. But now let us turn to a sort of reverse of this; and I believe

nothing is more essential to moral development and to man's saneness than a clear conception of it.
Hidden from the wise, revealed to babes.

By instinct, by grace, by right of birth, by simple initiative, and sometimes without suspecting it, we are the possessors of immense wealth, that through too much reflection and analysis and the rage for dissection and dialectics is lost to us. Not to recognize this fact, or to forget it, is one of the greatest misfortunes of life.

—I have sometimes had a sense of this danger. I fear it is one of the special evils of our own time.

THE FRIEND: The first condition of success in battle is acquaintance with the enemy. Forewarned is forearmed. We take pains to learn, and that is right and meritorious. The child is moved by a happy curiosity, and this curiosity must be kept awake. If well trained, it becomes in the man thirst for knowledge, mother of all the conquests of intelligence.

But if man as a result of toiling to know, were to find that he had unlearned what he knew already, he would suffer an irreparable loss, and he would have good cause to regret his former childlike assurance. Acquire knowledge, use the light you

have; but do not stifle the child within you—that is, the confident, spontaneous, sincere being, whose life of infinite riches is nourished through hidden contact with the Source. “*Through wisdom they have come to be fools.*”

Simple and upright souls receive this idea sooner than men cultivated to the point of over-refinement and artificiality. For these doctrinaires, things that are clear have become obscure. Jurists who through excess of legal knowledge no longer perceive justice; bewildered theologians, who have pressed out the divine in the herbarium of their subtleties; philosophers swallowed up in the quicksands of scepticism, who end by questioning their own existence; moralists who have so lost their bearings that they no longer distinguish the right from the left—in the face of these phenomena of man’s aberration, the saying of Jesus reasserts itself. It was for such cases that it was spoken.

It is the simple souls that see most clearly at the four corners where we question our route. Common-sense in reasoning, integrity of life, true eloquence, the highest faculty in art, even the secret of genius itself—all these are in simplicity. And

we may affirm that the supreme simplicity is that of souls of broad comprehension who have searched, thought, striven and had the power to remain children, to become children again, to join to the conquests of the man the patrimony of freshness, ingenuousness and sweet good faith that makes the charm of the child. In comparison with these, the sages of the world are put to confusion.

DON'T

THE FRIEND: Don't say, what can a word do?
It takes so little to help a soul.
Don't say, it was only a word.
It takes so little to hurt a soul.
To block the wagon going down hill, to prop the wagon going up, needs only a pebble.

PATIENCE

THE FRIEND: I will teach you patience for every-day use. It is possible to keep calm in the midst of all disturbances.

—Do you know the painful result of holding the rein too long on your indignation? You restrain

yourself, control yourself, but you consume yourself within. The waters gradually rise, and all at once the dike bursts, and the flood is worse than if there had been no dike.

THE FRIEND: Do not stop there; this is merely accidental to your novitiate. You will pass that stage. For the novice, patience is an effort that either wearies or excites him; he is patient against his bent. When once we have made the necessary advance, we are patient by our new nature, and patience becomes repose.

—I long for this deep peace of the heart, but who has it, whence does it come?

THE FRIEND: It comes from God, through the sons of great love and deep trust.

—And where are these?

THE FRIEND: Wherever a seed of eternal life has sprung up and blossomed in a soul. I shall approach the matter not as the advocate of a system, holding that one medium alone can foster them, but as an observer who has seen them living almost everywhere, under wide differences of latitude, of color and of creed. These men have undergone a transformation that has set everything to rights within them. They have come to see clearly

what matters, what is worth while, and are no longer embarrassed by the rest. They have abandoned the lower self, the worst enemy of us all, to abide with the higher self, where life consists in loving. They were slaves; they have become free. They were tremblers; they are stout of heart. They no longer spend their time in waiting or in apprehension; they are fast at their moorings. But no established formulas saved them from the void of fruitless days given over to the anxieties that make up our misfortunes. A ray of soft light has fallen into their souls—of light so rich that a reflection of it is left there forever. They have drunk at the spring which quenches all thirst, and the desire to drink at that which men dispute among themselves, is forever lost. They have ceased to fear what the crowd views with dismay, or to fix their hearts on things perishable, and peace has flooded their souls, bringing patience. They are serene, because they know that all man needs has come to abide with them.

These men do not resemble one another; each is a new creation. Nevertheless, there is something common to them all. They have the gift of pacifying other men. People seldom dispute in their presence, and where they go, bad feeling

hides away. What is more, they respect the human soul. It is not their business to vanquish, to proselyte, to control. Yet by some inner force and without constraint, hearts are turned toward them as plants toward the sun. In them is fulfilled this saying from the Mount: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

A WISH

THE FRIEND: For the good of those who live with you, as well as for your own, I make this wish for you:—The disposition of a good soldier, warm-hearted, cool-headed. After the battle, won or lost, if he is unharmed he has his well-earned rest, then furbishes up his arms and goes again afield; if he is wounded, he takes care of himself and dreams of going. If he falls, he leaves to others a gallant example: at thought of him their courage burns anew.

—If only I might be a soldier like that! I would begin each day with a ringing song. That should be my morning prayer, and the faintest hearts, hearing it, would grow strong again. O God, is not this life, happy life, true life, in spite of all its miseries?

FORERUNNERS

*"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred,
unto a land that I will show thee."*

*Follow orders ; plough and sow, but do not ask why. Thou
mayest well pose the question, but art not at the level of the
answer. One alone knows why, and that One loves thee : let it
suffice.*

FORERUNNERS

SPEAK OUT!

THE FRIEND:

GO to them and speak out. . . . —I would that I might, but you ask the impossible: these things are not to be spoken of.

THE FRIEND: What do you mean when you say a thing is not to be spoken of? I don't felicitate you on the expression. In some circles such a declaration is final; yet among the very same people lying is perfectly proper, while to act against conscience is the sign of suppleness of mind and betrays an emancipated spirit. The society of which I speak may be thus characterized: it wears clothes made to order, but contents itself with ready-made ideas. It would be better to have your ideas fit you, and content yourself with ready-made

clothes. Is what I ask you to do just? is there some necessity for your speaking, some courage or frankness in it? That is the question. If the thing is still "not to be spoken of," you may perhaps find in the formula itself, a new and adequate motive for charging your memory with it.

BY WHAT RIGHT?

THE critic asks: "By what right do you do this?" How shall I answer him?

THE FRIEND: Do not distress yourself on his account. Perhaps there must be critics also. "*Es muss auch solche Käuze geben,*" Goethe has said of another and a very malicious person. The critic is the policeman of thought, and could we get along without the police? I grant you that his hand is heavy, and his usual weapon a club. To his mind every free-lance is a vagabond. He would put an injunction on inspiration itself, if its wings carried it beyond the regulations. But do not trouble yourself about the critic. If you find it convenient, answer him; but don't imagine that he will listen to you. Answer him thus: "By what

right do I do this? By the right of the blade of grass to become a torch under the rays of morning; by the right of the brook to murmur, of oaks to roar in the tempest, of the pebble to fall, and of the wing to soar upward." If this does not content him, send him to ask the breeze for its papers, the hurricane for its passport.

BEFORE THE BATTLE

IT will be a hard battle; and we must see at least that we are out in full force.

THE FRIEND: What are we going to fight for, sacks of rice and bags of gold?
—No, we are going to fight for right, for truth, for peace and liberty.

THE FRIEND: Then why look to our numbers? When it is a matter of using violence, the number is the great thing, and it is never large enough. It is after the battle, when the danger is once past, that the difficulty begins. The question then presents itself of how to make enduring what has been established by force; how, by familiarizing it, to transform iniquity into justice, untruth into truth, spoliation into lawful possession. Colossal

task! No armed host is equal to it: it has always to be done over again.

In battling for the right, the war is waged under quite different conditions. If you have companions, so much the better, but if you have none do not complain. One voice suffices to disclose an imposture, or to announce the sunrise. If this voice is silent, the stones will cry out; if it is raised, they echo it!

DARE TO BE!

(Félix Pécaut)

HOW difficult it is to keep our bearings in the midst of criticism and attack, especially when we ourselves are afraid of going wrong! If our assailants were unenlightened and ill-intentioned, we should have but the misfortune of being attacked unjustly or misunderstood. But what a trial to find ourselves opposed by people of repute, by brave hearts and clear heads! The honesty of my antagonists impresses me. I feel the force of their arguments. Sometimes I wish they were entirely in the right, so that I might surrender my arms to them.

THE FRIEND: Listen! The linnet sings its song, the rose gives out its fragrance: have you observed that the lark has renounced its melody or the pink changed its array, in order to become like these? Follow their example and you will come to understand that no one has a right to contend against you, or you to resist him. Man's duty to each of his fellows is to let him manifest himself through what is most individual in him, in order to realize the greatest utility for the whole. Show your own colors, sound your own note; it is precisely for this that you are here. Stand firm, do your duty; be yourself and be true—true, above all, in your thought, and in the expression you give it in word or action. Keep your veneration for the stores of tradition, your attachment to the past, but flee as the plague all empty conventions, dead things that bring death with them. Keep out of the ruts of life, where the strongest forces get stuck in the mud; the ruts of thought, which turn you aside from the straight way. To be yourself, to be sincere, give out your own authentic thought—this is your salvation. But who, pray, is simple and undisguised? Who dares to be? Who has discovered that the truth will save him—that it is all-

beautiful, all-powerful? Life stirs in the seed of the future which would come forth, but that the weight of untruth crushes it back. Each follows his own short-sighted wisdom, his own distorted view of what is to his interest; each follows the mirage of illusory greatness. And all the time, but one thing is needful to make us truly greater, and that is to be a witness, a willing sacrifice, to that truth which saves alive all those who die for it. Let no one intimidate you; trace your furrow in peace. Neither say: "Those who come after us will be better and stronger than we; they will be younger men, men of a newer age, our sons perhaps." Does this concern you? It is bad enough to put off till to-morrow, but it is still worse to relegate to the future that which belongs to the present. This is the way of the bad citizen toward his own city and the city of the future. How could the flower appear, if the bud were not formed in time? And dost thou, obscure germ of what the future should unfold, find thyself too humble to dare accomplish thy task? If the day does not the day's work, how shall the future be brought forth? It will perish in the bud.

Take courage! It is by the splendor of the light

within that the world's pioneers live, and not by the splendor of their fame or their achievements. They should walk by faith. A voice has called them and they should answer: "Here we are!" Let them follow their orders and be deaf to all comment. Doubtless the sower of the future, humble laborer that he is, has the right to ask himself, "Who am I, that I should accomplish this thing?" But a greater than he inspires the sower, and replies: "Fear not, for I am with thee." The world is full of mysteries, history is full of enigmas. The spirit bloweth where it listeth. What is that to you? Let it work within you. It makes a man capable of deeds that surpass his farthest reach.

DISCUSSIONS

THESE wretched disputes wear me out and sadden me; and yet, how advance the truth except by measuring ourselves with our adversaries, refuting their arguments, and pushing them into the last ditch?

THE FRIEND: Frequent discussion is a great loss of time. Walk, if you would prove that there is such a thing as movement, and others will follow

you. If you attempt to show them its existence by dialectics, a more subtle mind than yours may prove by sophism that it has none. I have seen a lot of discussions in my day. At their close, the vanquisher triumphs, and the other, the vanquished, goes away, put to confusion, but strengthened in his idea. If good reasons are wanting, obstinacy supports him.

As to the onlookers, they talk of the tilt as though it were a duel with swords. They take sides, but the ground of the dispute concerns them little. All they care about is to come out ahead, to have their champion carry the day. To what does this lead? It makes them worse than before. Meanwhile, where is the truth? She has covered her face and turned aside to weep.

The sure method of making one's convictions profitable to one's fellow-men is by living up to them, seeing that they bear fruit. Our words should be only commentaries on our acts. There are two current forms of propaganda. One is to instil our doctrines into some, and to brand them with the mark of the herd to which we belong; the other is to keep up a guerilla warfare on the ideas of others, till they succumb from sheer weariness.

ness. In the first, ideas serve as a bridle to guide minds and hold them in check; in the second, they are weapons with which we transfix our neighbor or beat him down. If the rare good fortune of having an idea has befallen you, what a pity to employ it in such a business! How much greater the profit to all concerned, if you let its light shine forth through your way of living and in the active kindness and the self-surrender that makes a man free!

Do not argue. Act!

FALSE GODS

THERE are those whose god is always on the side of the strongest. When fortune deserts one camp, he abandons it for another. This god must be rich, for he sides against the poor, and to demonstrate his majesty, he crushes the weak. In clashes of interest, he is found among the more crafty; in conflicts of opinion or creed, he is with the authorities; and when an innocent man gets worsted, he approves, through deference to established rule, the sentence that undoes him.

He is the god of diplomats, of conquerors, of

vanquishers, of spoilers, of churchmen. He is the god of the *status quo*. He apportions the earth; he is the god of influence and place. He is mindful of his adorers, aids them to advance in the world, and makes them, moreover, on very advantageous conditions, brilliant promises for the future life.

THE FRIEND: Put no trust in this god, whatever patents of nobility his champions display. Do not let yourself be intimidated by his thunderbolts. Prick the bubble of his impostures, brave his wrath, and laugh his hatred to scorn. When he calls you, flee from him; flee from him, for he is a liar, he takes what is not his, and his hands are stained with blood. A word judges him and unseats him from the throne he has usurped: *This god is not a fair dealer.*

REJOICE IN THE VANQUISHED

I AM a child of my age; but though I love it with all my heart, it is very perplexing. Its science establishes by the law of selection the pre-eminence of the strongest; it very seriously establishes the principle that it is meet and right

for certain beings to disappear. But its heart is tender toward the vanquished; it has a horror of violence; it deems it base to be found on the side of the strong hand. How escape from this contradiction?

THE FRIEND: Rejoice in the vanquished; they are more interesting than the victors. Victory is hideously proud. The best man and the best cause degenerate through victory. There is a fatality in triumph: the day of a man's glory is his judgment day, and no sooner has he set foot in the high places of dominion than his acts begin to deteriorate in the eyes of the Spirit. Beaten to earth, the most odious cause becomes, in a way, sympathetic; triumphant, the most engaging cause becomes suddenly ugly, with an ugliness before unknown. The gold is transmuted into lead.

Rejoice in the vanquished; give your heart to the outraged and persecuted; be on the side of the anvil and not of the hammer.

How atrocious the divinity that manifests itself against the humble, the feeble, the outcast, the oppressed and miserable, but is propitious to the strong and those whose measure is full! That divinity I hate, with its temples, its altars, its in-

cense, its priests and its worshippers! Base sectaries of force, who go to and fro in the world parading this device: *We are the strongest because we are the best*—in vain do you seek to array Science on your side! You will not convert us to the *God of Victory*, to his religion of pomp, to his false *Te Deums!* Since the cross has become a symbol in the world, the vanquished appear to men in a new light.

The truth is that the best men succumb in this unjust and brutal life. The ground is fructified by the blood of martyrs. The vanquished are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Without them humanity would have long ago perished from its sorry victories. What ideas are most tenacious in the world? Those that have been most persecuted. What ideas decline and lose ground in the soul? Those which have celebrated the most triumphs, oppressed the most consciences, reduced to silence the greatest number of independent thinkers.

"GET THEE OUT OF THY COUNTRY"

IHAVE the deepest respect for the things of the past; it extends even to old furniture and old clothes; and as for the venerable symbols of the Faith of the Fathers, my reverence for them is still greater. Why has my whole life consisted in farewells?

THE FRIEND: Do not complain. There are those whom a voice calls to leave their kindred and their country. Let each one listen to this voice, since to those who know how to be faithful to it, humanity owes all its places of refuge. But it is often the lot of those who find them or construct them, to sleep with the stars for cover. This, too, you must make up your mind to, so that if you pay the price in this wise, you will not regret it. After all, the old symbols are worth only the spirit within them, and that spirit will not be perpetuated unless men are found courageous enough to follow it even beyond the letter. The important thing is to remain faithful to the original inspiration. Have you sometimes reflected that to obey the spirit of the master who says to you: "Go!" you must separate yourself from him in the flesh? To betake

yourself away, then, in order to remain near in spirit and in truth—this is your life of farewell and of fidelity. Who is the more faithful to the traditions of the fathers: he who respects their dwelling-place to the point of refusing to repair it, on the ground that to do so one must touch what is sacred; or he who hardly puts his hand to it, and restores it? And which of these two also is more faithful to the same traditions: he who, seeing the coming ruin of the home, quits it and builds one himself, as his fathers did before him; or he who clings to the crumbling walls and decaying rafters, though it must cost him his health and his life and the life of his children? It is a question that needs no answer.

Do not look back to the fathers with sadness. Pioneers themselves, they love pioneers, and will recognize their blood.

—It is not the Fathers whom I fear, or Christ, or the Prophets; it is my brothers of to-day, flesh of my flesh, who think to serve God in calling us infidels. I suffer from their exclusion much more than if it were just.

THE FRIEND: Their brothers have never appreciated the toilers for the future: 'tis a law of the

world to which one must submit manfully. Do not ask the impossible of others, or even what is difficult. Love them, but do not listen to them. Listen only to the voice which since Abraham's day has said to the faithful: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me."

IN PASTURE LANDS

THE vast alpine pastures undulate beneath the sky. From these heights the scattered bands of grazers look like colonies of ants; and down in yonder desolate gulch, a flock of black sheep gives the effect of a handful of soot let fall by a sweep. To the tinkle of bells and its echo from the rocks, there is everywhere browsing, grazing, chewing of the cud. The grass is the nursling of the earth, the beast eats the grass, man drinks the milk of the beast and eats its flesh.

THE FRIEND: All this is only a figure: it translates and makes sensible facts of the inner world. Elemental truth, truth not yet humanized, resembles the solid earth with its inorganic matter. The elements that nourish the spirit are shut up within it, but inaccessible to ordinary mortals. Special-

ized organs are needed to make them profitable to one's self and assimilable for others. The vigorous minds of certain men are provided with a special faculty for performing this function. They live where others would perish; they make bread out of stones. When they have passed through a domain hitherto inhospitable and sterile, they leave it to some degree habitable and productive. They are the initiators, the pioneers. Other men, living in their shadow and from their hand, are their nurslings. But the nursling is by nature ungrateful; he beats the breast that gives him nourishment. So also does humanity persecute and put to death those who give it life.

RESPECT THE SOUL

THE FRIEND: He who leads Orion like a flock, has put as the limit of His power the freedom of a soul: He forces none, not even for its salvation. To reach a poor wretch who is staining his soul and wandering astray, He makes Himself humble, almost suppliant. What a lesson for man, always inclined to impose his will; for the just, regarding sinners from the height of their uprightness !

We are too great before the small, and it is the surest sign of our moral mediocrity. To dominate, to control, to direct, to restrain—this is our method. And the results are deplorable: feigned submission, superficial allegiance, indifference and revolt.

It is the current practice to dominate the consciences of others. Each one interferes to point out the motives which he thinks should determine a course of action. Parents override the consciences of their children: they replace their rightful authority by abuse of their privilege as elders: they deform the character of their own flesh and blood. The churches act in like manner. On all sides souls are being sacrificed to conformity. Scripture says: "Thou shalt not pass the razor over the heads of my Prophets." But these are they whose heads are shaven oftenest; nay, more, their mouths are stopped. Coerce no one; do not seek to proselyte. To dominate the spirit of another is an immoral action. Simply make light; illumine life by that clearness which the highest love sheds abroad. Then your influence will be for freedom, will carry life with it, will be creative of new activity and of personal conviction. Then you will not quench the light of the spirit, and instead of converting some

of your fellows into automatons and certain soul germs into mummies, you will help them to be born anew into the higher life.

THE BIBLE AND CRITICISM

THE FRIEND: There are people who seem to take pleasure in giving a bad account of these two powers. According to some of them, the Bible pretends to privileges; in the minds of others, Criticism approaches the Bible with malicious intent.

All this is false rumor, nothing but smoke. Let us state the whole matter fairly and squarely.

The Bible *is*. Criticism sets out to explore it in itself and by itself, not on the faith of third persons. You may naturally reason that the Bible ought to gain by being known as it really is: that such accurate knowledge should bring into accord all right-minded men who have no private interest to further.

—I am quite of your opinion. But I have another that no one shall take from me. The questions of authenticity are very interesting: but before they are solved, much water will flow under bridges. Well, after applying myself to them to the best of my ability, and strictly in accordance with the

demands of conscience, I take again my old Bible, and I say to it: Just as thou art, I love thee, thou who dost weep all our tears and shout aloud with our joys! It is sweet to read thee after the fashion of the ignorant, so great thou art in thy anonymity and thy eternity! Thy authors and thy origins are of small account: the human soul has brought thee forth in suffering and in hope: thou makest the measure of its misery and its nobility. And I love in thee all those who have drunk at thy sources, reposed under thy shade, and laid their heads down upon thee for the last sleep.

* * * * *

THE Bible teems with words of life as the heavens teem with stars: and like the stars, these words are worlds.

HAVE A CARE!

HOW much simpler is the Gospel than councils and the Fathers, than theologians of any sort: how much more help can a word of Christ's give than all their learned complexities! Who shall deliver us from the hodge-podge of the critics, that we may listen again to the Voice on the Mount?

THE FRIEND: Have a care! Do not commit an injustice. It takes a great deal of good theology to keep us from making bad. If you distrust the doctor, you run the risk of falling into the hands of the empirics.

The whole of man's patrimony needs to be censored. No good bread without good wheat, no good wheat without sifting. Sifters of texts, sorters of ideas—their professions are indispensable. Let us do them justice, though we must deny their ability to create.

Now and then, I must confess, their work becomes exasperating; it produces the effect of windmills whose tick-tack and creakings deafen us. At such times avail yourself of your liberty, go elsewhere. Become a child again, expand your soul in God's sunlight and receive His dew without further concern.

ATHEISM

HE is an atheist.

THE FRIEND: Hm! Just what do you think you have said in saying that? You must not confound the different kinds of atheism; it is of capital importance to distinguish be-

tween them. There are as many atheisms as there are fashions of believing in God. What God is it, that your atheist is without? That is the point to be determined. Socrates was called an atheist, Jesus a blasphemer, God Himself should be an atheist for all the false gods, that is to say, for no few of the forms under which He is Himself caricatured and invoked.

Atheism springs from a deadly root when it is the fruit of impiety: the whole man is vitiated by it. It means the absence of all respect, of all reverence, of every sentiment of the value of God's creation. A spirit of impurity and profanation animates it. Under this form atheism is not a doctrine but a depravity. It is not legitimate to confound it with respectable states of mind. Moreover, this atheism may be met with among men who profess to believe in God. Do not be deceived. Believing in God does not consist in pronouncing His name and swearing by a creed. If the heart is impure, if it cherishes hatred, scorns the rights, the ideas and the creeds of others; if it is without respect, tenderness or scruple, it harbors the worst sort of atheism, the kind that is hypocritically adorned with the insignia of religion. I fear the form is widespread.

Another form is even more so. Belief which has become petrified through secular routine, is retained, in thousands of cases, like a foreign matter, having no connection with the organism, no action on life. This is practical atheism. And the majority of men have no better religion: they are brothers of these routinary atheists, denying God with the same indifference with which the latter affirm Him.

Philosophic atheism arises from numerous causes. Certain minds, caught in the mechanical conception of the world, consider the idea of God a superfluity. It seems to them to answer to nothing positive, consequently they eliminate it, or imagine that they do so. Their atheism is frequently genial. With others atheism is the result of an impossibility to believe, of which they are grievously sensible.

But at bottom, what god do they deny? Most of them prove to us by their writings and conversation, that it is a pure abstraction, a vague image, a deity still-born, like to a premature fruit fallen from the tree. Their negations never destroy anything but a phantom. They keep the indestructible nucleus of the idea of God, and, under other names,

draw from it the essentials of their thought. The death of the gods is one of their favorite theses, but without knowing it, they labor for their resurrection.

The most interesting form of atheism is that wherein a conception of Deity, hitherto accepted, loses form before the progress of the human conscience. When the man has become greater, more disinterested, more just, in short, better than his God, the image formed in his heart grows pale and fades away. There are such cases of superior atheism. Looking closely at the official God, one is obliged to confess that he receives only his dues. If Mythology attributed to the gods manners that would shame any mortal with some slight idea of propriety, we surprise but too often in current religious teaching, doctrines of God revolting to the conscience. He is given a mentality like that of an oriental despot with no account to render, puerile, mischief-making, resentful, arbitrary. He exacts a justice that He does not practise, imposes sufferings from which He is Himself exempt. His partiality is prodigious and His imperturbable serenity makes a scandalous contrast with human misery. By the side of a man sincere, devoted, up-

right, just, charitable, this figure lacks moral attraction. And the attitude of its defenders achieves its compromise. They have entangled their God in too many unrighteous undertakings, they have too often made his cause one with theirs, substituted for God's face, their own mask.

Who knows if the true God has not broken with His accredited champions, to go dwell incognito in the hearts of those who name Him not, but live from His life? At all events, the situation is grave. It demands the consideration and efforts of all religious men, and particularly of those who have the cure of souls. Through what filter of repentance, grief and persistent travail must our conception of God not pass, that it may come forth again limpid, salutary, liberative, as it sprang from the hearts of the Prophets and of Jesus!

But the pronounced atheists, those who talk of the disappearance of God, or think it their mission to uproot the idea of God from our souls, in order to weed out of them the tares of a mummified, demoralizing, schismatic, narrow religion, the foe of liberty and of human progress, deceive themselves. Man has need of God. Rather than do without Him, he will clasp in his arms poor fetishes. If

you would free him from the slavery of doctrines that stifle him, give him a conception of God in which he may breathe.

The evil should not make us forget the good. The idea of God has burst upon man in a wondrous light. You yourself, by inheritance, are impregnated with it. No one will ever replace it by anything but itself, purified, made conformable to the new level of conscience and of social life. Let all men of good-will follow each his own way and do his work disinterestedly. Some day they will all have amassed, through toil and suffering, the material for a new religious edifice, open to the air of heaven, hospitable, worthy of humanity and of God.

On that day we shall owe special gratitude to the toilers of earlier times, including the pious atheists whom the inadequacy of existing religions had forced into negation and driven back upon themselves to search for something better.

SOCIALISM

ARE you a socialist?

THE FRIEND: No.

—Impossible! I believed you won, soul and body, to this great cause of the people, of woman, of all enfranchisements and all amends. And you are not a socialist? What a contradiction!

THE FRIEND: It is logic rather.

—You are a conservative, then? a liberal?

THE FRIEND: Still less. To avoid Charybdis, shall I dash headlong upon Scylla? Listen. If socialism were but a disinterested tendency toward perfect justice for all, I should be a socialist to the letter. But it is so many other things that I must needs flee this *ism* like all the rest. I am with the cause of the people; but those who arrogate to themselves the sole knowledge of that cause and its exclusive defence—with them I am not. In one camp they are violent, unjust, moved by hatred: how should I join them? In the other they are particularists to such a degree that their natural tendency is forever leading toward division. There is not even, except provisionally, a good under-

standing among them as partisans. Excommunication is one of their principal forms of activity. When one of them distinguishes himself, he immediately becomes a suspect. I find their fraternity too quarrelsome, their equality too suspicious, their liberty too much infected with toeing the mark. Allowance must be made for faults. Everybody commits them. But there is no inconsistency in demanding of a man that he have the mental elevation of his ideal. The more I am drawn and fascinated by the splendid ideal of humanity, the more thoroughly shoddy do its accredited champions seem to me. I fear that the socialism of to-day is anti-social in many of its ruling tendencies.

—You are very severe. Think of all the difficulties of the battle for the future, and of the misery of the point of departure; think of the darkness in the social conditions among which minds must operate. The men of whom you speak, coming from the midst of these conditions, cannot help bringing error with them. What would be the showing of the middle classes measured by like standards?

THE FRIEND: Our greatest severity and our most exacting scruples should be for the favored cause. Against a crowd of socialists I have this—

that they are as bourgeois as the bourgeois, and hypocritical into the bargain. They lay claim to another kind of world, but they are conservers of the chief vices of this one. Where is their disinterestedness? To desire a better condition of life at the expense of somebody else, that you may reap the benefit, does not seem to me particularly meritorious. How long has it been a virtue to *arrive*? I see here in the crowd, appetites; in the leaders, ambition. By what privilege are these appetites more worthy of consideration than those of the middle classes? By what grace is this ambition less impure? The spirit of clamoring for something is no more a liberative force than is the spirit of satisfaction or satiety.

—You see only the evil. Is it I, this time, who must point out the good to you? So much generous bestowal of self, so much suffering endured for the cause, so much of the spirit of sacrifice brought into play and scattered broadcast in hope of better times! Such an incalculable sum of courage, of endurance; such an invincible movement ahead, in spite of the misery of the present and its crushing burdens! The people have won me completely. I find them so kind, so great-hearted, so prompt

to pardon, so slow to wrath, so admirable in their hope of a nobler humanity.

THE FRIEND: The people are one thing, the politics and political economy of the socialistic parties are quite another. To live on the people is not to live the life of the people. To advertise one's self of the people, is not to belong to the people in heart. To exploit a cause is not to serve it. If we could pass through the sieve of good sense and equity all these socialisms, laic and ecclesiastic, there would not be much good grain left for the plantings of the future. Moreover, everywhere here I see an unequal partition: some, in the van, make the noise, and claim to conduct affairs: others do the work, and are totally ignored. Shall we travel in the band-wagon?

—Unhappily there is no doubt much truth in these criticisms; but in spite of it, socialism remains one of the greatest forces for good and for progress active at the present time.

THE FRIEND: I agree with you: the trouble is to steer clear of the *patrons*, the self-styled socialists and their dictums. But suppose the sole force here were a spirit detached from base appetites and vulgar ambitions; suppose it were an overwhelm-

ing desire that the best should be realized and that a society less criminal and more coherent should come into being; what good could we expect of this rage for theorizing? The greater number of these self-proclaimed men of the future are drunken with formulas, fanatics on the subject of equality. The society of their dreams is a set of pigeon-holes. Moreover, they sweep out of the mind everything which at first sight does not square with their system. Such processes as these dry up the springs of life. At the beginnings of great movements, come the forerunners, the scouts, the prophets, much inspiration, much energy, much power of expansion. The functionaries come late. They dig ditches for the idea to circulate in until the time comes to dig it a grave which they shall seal with their signet. But in the case of socialism, the doctrinaires, the formula-mongers, the scholastics and pedants have choked the beginnings. Do you not see also the incoherence of their philosophy? Champions of the oppressed, defenders of the feeble, the most of them adopt a complete materialistic doctrine. They are in a war against egoism, against the right of the stronger, and yet they proclaim a theory of life wherein weakness is

the supreme defect, and egoism chief of all the virtues. To make a new society come forth, broad, altruistic, fraternal, it is necessary to adopt another ideal from the lower utilitarianism that is waxing strong under our eyes, other motives of action and a clearer, more correct view of human nature. I see our profound defects, our social plagues; you will never find me in the ranks of the satisfied or of those resigned to iniquity and misery. This world must be vanquished—not one stone left upon another: but this wicked world will be vanquished by the Spirit, injustice by justice, hatred by love, slavery by freedom, rapacity by sacrifice, falsehood by truth. It is not the brute in man that is to found the City of the Future. For these reasons, I cannot be converted to the socialism of the day; on the contrary, I think it has the utmost need of being converted to a superior socialism, just as doctors have need of conversion to hygiene, judges to justice, the Synagogue to the Prophets, and Christians to the Gospel.



THE FRIEND: If each one were willing to put into his practical living, a hundredth part of his socialism, we should be saved. The pipers are legion, but the dancers are few, and by an unfortunate perversion of altruism, each one manufactures socialism—for his neighbor.

CHERISH THE IDEAL

IN the sanctuary of the soul, make ready the Kingdom of Heaven. Put in the place of honor at the bar of conscience, what is condemned at the bar of justice. Crown with beauty what life dishonors and blights. Deliver the oppressed, give a country to the exile, a hearth to the disinherited, a companion to the solitary. Wreath the brows of the vanquished, right wrongs, bridge chasms. It is in us that the victory over the world begins, if first we have cleansed our hearts, blotted out the old iniquity, rejected hatred, willed the good with all the strength of our resolution, accepted the sacrifice. Do not haul down the flag of the ideal before the demonstrations of a gross reality. Lift up your heart, my son! When brute force triumphs without, when foolishness and

wickedness vaunt themselves and receive the plaudits of the crowd, it is time to offer to the ideal the homage of the soul. Do not love it half-heartedly, tamely, with regret, as something impossible and condemned already. Give it all your faith. Move in its light, and even the darkness around you will become day.

The egg must be brooded on before it can hatch. Loved and cherished in our hearts, the future, more beautiful therefor, is slowly fashioned. Some day the thick shell, the prison-house where the coalition of its enemies holds it fast, will burst under the impulse of the life within, and the ideal will open its wings in the very heart of reality.

THE CHURCH CATHOLIC

THE FRIEND: To the holy Church, one, universal, all the others should be open ways, bringing from north and south, from east and west, across the diversities of life and of thought, the fragments of humanity to humanity at one with itself. Visible portals to an invisible sanctuary, leading above and beyond themselves; humble alone, but collaborators in a splendid design—thus

the churches appear to me in their ideal. Practically they are old and respectable social firms, where under various guises and in competition, formal religion is cultivated. They confine their adepts in the vestibule, and the door that should open upon the higher sanctuary is walled up. Pitiful abasement! But there is something that is worse still. The churches form exclusive centres of conservatism, where by the concentration of all fears, the obstruction of all progress is compassed.

The very real good accomplished in these centres, is neutralized by their rivalries and their almost fatal spirit of narrowness. Their practice is so far from their ideal, that it lacks little of being its negation. In fact, the churches may be counted among the chief agencies of division among men. There are no more considerable obstructions in the way of universal brotherhood.

—How pass from such a reality to the ideal?

THE FRIEND: The way is hard, for the evil is of long standing, and it considers itself the highest good. There is but one remedy: the distress of those believers who are peaceful and fraternal. Nothing is so ingenious as pain. I am going to point out to you a means it has suggested to me.

You know what a bitter warfare men wage for bread: it is one of their principal causes of conflict. What have they found that speaks above the din, bringing uppermost other sentiments than the enmity of this strife? They have found hospitality. Hospitality consists in saying for an hour to one's fellow-man: "My house is thy house, my table thy table, my bread thy bread." In the midst of the struggle for "goods," hospitality seems the touchstone of a better society, a society of peaceful accord and mutual devotion.

The churches should give heed, should do the same as individuals—they should practise a broad, generous and kindly hospitality, such as one meets in certain families where the guest even of a day feels at home, because he feels welcome, understood, loved.

—O my friend, how youthful you are—you who have seen so many men! The pebbles of the riverbank will spread wing among the white gulls, sooner than hardened, embittered hearts, inclined to violent antagonisms, will follow the gentle slope along which you think to lead them.

THE FRIEND: It pleases me to aspire with ardor to what is difficult. We should know how to will

what is legitimate, hope for what we love. All human ills come from one source—bad hearts. We must purify the source, desire the good with unfailing ardor, think about it, talk about it. For myself, when gross realities shock my eyes, I salute in spirit that which should be. I ask the churches, then, to receive each other, to vie with one another in courtesies. To-day the synagogue would open its doors to faithful Christians, to-morrow the Christians would receive the Jews in their churches and cathedrals. Something of the general cordial spirit would then reign that must have breathed beneath the tents of Abraham when he entertained at night his mysterious guests. Should there appear somewhere a new form of worship, were a church built, there would be a spiritual hanging of the crane, in the presence of brothers of other cults. And all this, not for the purpose of proselyting, and without weakening anyone's convictions, but to show that if there are still ideas which separate us, there are many which unite us, and that we feel our brotherhood in suffering as in hope, in poverty as in splendor.

—This is indeed very touching: but are you serious? Is it not purely a scheme for Utopia? Go

make your proposition to the chiefs of both sides. You will meet with scorn and haughty refusals.

THE FRIEND: When one has a good cause, he must not stop at rebuff and refusal. Rivalries, clashing opinions and atavisms heap up around us like mountain-peaks, with yawning gulfs between. Far above all these, into the calm region of reconciled humanity, we must direct our flight. Bask in the gracious light which falls from the infinite on the snowy heights and into the black abyss; live in that which should be, and you will transform that which is. You will bring back from your excursion into the ideal, the strength to care for every detail, even the least, which makes for betterment. The virulence of the sectarian spirit is unbelievable; the world of to-day is poisoned with it. One reason the more for devoting ourselves to the things which have in them the force to make way against it. To live and work by faith is better than to let ourselves become demoralized by the disconcerting things we see under our eyes. Do you think yourself alone? Am I not with you? Do you not share my opinion, hope my hopes? Dare foresee victory for that which is the object of your deep and fixed conviction.

And be sure that you have sympathizers: unfurl your banner, and they will rally round it. Let those who believe in the future pacification and the brotherhood of mankind, escape now and then from the scandals of sectarianism, to meet together and share the best they have to give. The rights of the ideal are imprescribable. Believe me, the ideal Church, the Church of God, the Church of minds not bound by the details which separate, exists, though invisible. Almost everywhere, among the most diverse surroundings, men live who have more satisfaction in finding a single point in common, than in unearthing a hundred reasons for division. The stone is ready for the building of a lofty and luminous city, not to be hid, where hearts now weaned from brotherly love may begin anew to chant hymns in praise of it. Make ready for this praise, imposing and public, by warm friendliness, by expansion of the heart, and the hour will come when that which ye have spoken in the ear, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

HUMANITY TRIUMPHANT, HUMANITY MILITANT

THE FRIEND: We may conceive afar off, like an ideal figure, a perfected humanity. All who toil for the future are lighted on their way by the radiance of this vision. In the days of storm and stress, as in those—still more exhausting—of dead calm, the beauty of this lofty conception is their strength.

And yet, in spite of the splendor of the ideal, in spite of this beneficent ray falling on our path, the march interests me more than the arrival.

Humanity militant is humanity heroic: I find her more beautiful in her wounds and her struggles than encircled with the halo of victory. Aspiration is infinitely more attractive to me than possession, as the promise of daybreak has more charm to my eyes than the golden light of noon.

NUNC DIMITTIS

TEACH me the art of retiring.

THE FRIEND: By the small number of those who practise it, you may judge of its difficulty. Many people know almost everything except how to make an exit: they have no gift

for vanishing at the timely moment. Their work finished, they cannot resign themselves to pick up their tools and be off. Frequently they spoil the best thing they do by obstinately keeping at it.

We should know how to withdraw with a good grace, and not wait for the force of circumstances to uproot us, in intimation of a brutal ejection.

To the pulpit orator, Luther gives this counsel: "Tritt frisch auf; thu' den Mund auf, und hör' bald auf!"* It might well extend from the art of speaking to the art of living. There are those who cannot find their peroration: they go to sleep over it, and their auditors with them. Like these orators are the men who do not know how to withdraw at the propitious moment. And institutions are like individuals: the world is cumbered with anarchronisms long since ripe for retirement. Their usefulness past, they cling to their ground, barring the way to the future, showing scant courtesy to any new thing that would spring up and wax strong in the earth.

Nunc dimittis! Now let thy servant depart! How beautiful in their mildness and serenity are these words of the aged Simeon, who asks that

* Come forth apace ; open your mouth, and shut it betimes.

he may go in peace! Set out with enthusiasm, plough your furrow vigorously, and, your labor done, retire to the background, that your shadow may not retard the growth of the sprouting grain. This is the sole manly method, conducive alike to the highest general interest and to personal happiness.

Renounce in time, avoid a host of miseries, of impotent efforts to ally these two incompatible things—to be and to have been.

But this art, like all others, is a long one. We acquire its elements through unimportant happenings. If you would initiate yourself into its secrets, train yourself not to linger over anything. Long speeches, long letters, interminable farewells, explanations without end, everything which, meant to endure a limited time, takes permanent root, becomes chronic, eternalizes itself, should be severely passed by. Learn not to linger anywhere. It will give you an excellent impulse for the decisive moments when it is a question of weighing anchor for good.

BY FAITH

*I am only a storm-tossed atom ; but at times I have caught
glimpses of the great reassuring calm which lies at the bottom
of things, and I know there is no ground for concern.*

I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.

BY FAITH

PRAYER

FATHER, defend us, enfolded in the strength of Thy tenderness. Our inconstant spirit has need of it. Too many things perturb us; do Thou reassure us! Are we not Thine in the dark passages of life as in the luminous? in the incomprehensible as in that which to us seems clear?

WAVERING FAITH

THE FRIEND: Though the forms of our thought should remain subject to endless modification, and never reach the rounded truth, those of us will be the least mistaken who have confidence, who believe in the endless future, in all things that inspire us, and that, enlarging our hearts and widening our horizons, make us forget our mis-

ery, and complete and illumine this fragmentary life. Man's spirit lives and breathes in these things; the soul expands in their warmth. The humble faith, at once fearful and hardy, that wavers like a child beginning to walk, has like the child the future within it. There is nothing to compare with it. Its simplicity confounds the wise, enlightens the ignorant, steals the strong, supports the weak. If life sometimes appears to us like a fearful abyss, has not faith wings with which to clear it?

TO REMOVE MOUNTAINS

NEVER shall we resolve all these problems; there are too many!

THE FRIEND: Then why number them? Why persist in dealing with the whole? It is by portions that we must attack and overcome the world if we would know what is meant by victory over its fearful mechanism, its determinism, its fatalities. Every act of good intention and genuine faith is an act of redemption and creation. It establishes a better condition of things, and through the rift it makes in the web

of evil, hatred, and slavery wherein we are caught, it lets us see the land of liberty. Do not neglect the opportunities you have for doing what you see to be possible, for the sake of some problematic opportunity in the far future when you shall be great enough to attempt even the impossible. It is by the imperceptible and slow accumulation of effort upon effort that the new universe is building. By displacing atoms you will have removed mountains.

SOLA FIDE

THE world is inexplicable, for it has no limits and every explanation lies between two hedges. Absolute confidence is the sole basis of large living: *The just shall live by his faith.* There is no measure for the tremendous meaning of these words; they are universal. Those who first spoke them made a landing on an unknown shore. But to have discovered a new continent is not to have explored it. What a way from the old prophet, Habakkuk, to Saint Paul, and from Saint Paul to Luther! They set foot in a new world, but no

one will ever make the round of it: there is room for the procession of all the ages.

THE LIFE OF FAITH

BE not afraid, only believe. *Thy faith hath saved thee. The just shall live by his faith.* What have we to do with these venerable sayings, worn with repetition, and oftenest misunderstood? Their meaning, as terse as it is comprehensive, is this—*Have the courage to trust yourself to the power in which the universe reposes.* It is the great step, the great thing. To trust thus largely and calmly is an act of spiritual courage. But is it not by launching into open space that the bird first learns he has wings?

This act of initiative and daring, this resolute step of entire confidence, is at the same time the most reasonable proceeding that a creature may undertake. Give credit to God; no wisdom, no prudent calculation could be safer. It is not going too far; it is not building on the sand; it is choosing the rock. The solvency of God passes the limit of our thought.

CONFIDENCE

FAITH is confidence in God. It is not the compliance of a mind ready to accept everything, or that elastic aptitude for believing which admits the unlikely or even the absurd.

The man of little faith is he who distrusts the stability of the universe and of its organization. He has but small confidence in the final result. The impression he gets from the spectacle of the universe, as well as from the life of man, is one of disorder and incoherence to which he can offer no counterpoise.

The man of faith also sees the chaos of life, the impassive brutality of natural law. But he is not resigned to the sentence of blind fatality. The vestige of the Spirit of which he is conscious within him hinders him from self-abandonment and surrender. If he is lost in the dark, caught up in the whirlwind, he has his compass and keeps his bearings. He will not admit that the cause is judged, but waits for an appeal. Even under the stroke that fells him to earth and seems to be the end, he says: I will stand my

ground! In essence, faith is audacity carried to infinity. Faith is "the victory that overcometh the world."

He who dies for his faith does not give his life for an article of the catechism, even though it has that appearance. In reality he offers himself a sacrifice to affirm that which alone gives value to life, that which is its final end and its higher aim, and without which life itself is only death disguised.

To filch his faith from one's fellow-man is worse than stealing his money or his house—it is to destroy the roof over his head and cut the ground from under his feet. You tremble at the idea of your children's finding themselves some day without food or shelter; how then can you bear the thought of their being without faith! He only who does not believe in his destiny is homeless, without a place.

The most precious thing that a man has is faith. It embraces all things else. Love is so great only because it holds implicit faith within it. If you believe neither in the world, nor in man, nor in the future; if your *credo* is the cry, "All is vanity," your love has no root and comes

from an inconstant heart. They who love once and for all have put into their love somewhat of that bread of life which nourishes unquenchable faith.

Wherein lies the good, wherein the evil? Where is the standard of thought and action? It is here.

Everything that increases our faith, broadens our view, gives us a higher conception of the value of life, and stouter courage to toil on hopefully, is good.

Everything that shakes our confidence, dampens our ardor, narrows our view, lowers us in our own eyes and discourages us, is bad.

CREDULITY—INCREDULITY

CREDULITY is a disposition to accept readily whatever is presented to us. Its chief characteristic is a notable absence of judgment.

Faith is an act of enlightened confidence in the Power which conducts the world, in the destiny of man, in just causes that are linked with the very cause of humanity.

Credulity is of all the ages. As it is a part

of the policy of letting things take their own course, it falls within the programme of the greater number.

Faith also is of all the ages; but as it involves resolution, energy, an extraordinary expenditure of self, it is the portion of an *élite*.

When incredulity consists in forming no convictions without good and valid reason, in distrust of dogmatic assertion and of authorities that conscience does not approve, it is a virtue of the first rank: when, on the contrary, it consists in setting at naught the Universe, the Spirit, and man's destiny, it is no longer anything but an infirmity of the mind.

CONFUSION OF IDEAS

THE questionings of faith do not arise solely from the obscurities of life or from the number and extent of the problems that rise before us. One of their most abundant sources is the confusion of ideas.

There are in the minds of men strange pre-possessions and misunderstandings on the subject of faith.

The simple expression, "I believe," by the variety of interpretations it admits of, may easily give rise to all sorts of mistakes. "I believe" may mean, I suppose. In this case faith would be hypothesis. And many people understand it to be just that. But hypotheses offer only a relative security, and many prefer not to make them. Then there is the blind faith that accepts on the word of another, without verification. Not everybody is ready to practise that either.

Furthermore, faith is confounded with belief. At times this is a dangerous error. Belief is the intellectual envelope of faith.

By a process quite legitimate and conformable to our needs, faith, from age to age, gives birth to belief. Faith in itself secret, incommunicable in its essence, manifests itself and is spread abroad in the world by symbols. Every belief is a symbol, and its value depends upon the energy with which it expresses, feeds, and inspires faith.

But belief if indispensable is also variable. Beliefs pass, faith remains.

It is a great misfortune when belief so crystallizes as to lose the flexibility which permits it

to interpret faith conformably to the changing mental states of successive epochs. Its office is to speak all tongues, be all things to all men, in order that the voice of eternity may vibrate across the passing voices of the generations. But the greatest misfortune arrives where belief remains after faith has fled. There we have a lie set up in the very sanctuary. Dead belief puts faith to death, and forbids its resurrection.

FAITH AND SIGHT

A VERY old conflict is still going on between Faith and so-called positive knowledge. The source of this conflict is the inveterate abuse certain men make of Faith when they describe it as the science of the unknowable. Then the knowledge which rests on observation arrays itself against the knowledge that knows what it has not learned and what cannot be tested by experiment.

Such a conflict, though inevitable, wrongs Faith and positive knowledge alike. It is of capital importance to mankind that each of its propensi-

ties be respected in its proper place. Man has need of all his practical discernment and all his powers of intuition.

If Faith is a science to be set forth in paragraphs wherein the secret workings of things are laid bare and explained in detail, then its labor is an unlawful competition with that of experimental reason, and the Universe it builds is at the mercy of every chance. A late discovery may overturn the edifice.

If positive science pretends of herself to furnish souls with the bread of life, she risks drying up the sources whence we draw our spiritual vigor, a loss she would in no wise be able to make good.

Here we touch the central knot of the inner life. In trying to undo it nothing essential within us must be mutilated. There must be meditation. We need a solution that shall be impartial and respectful of man's equipoise; it must be antagonistic neither to this need of searching, of weighing, of seeing, of defining, out of which has come Science with all its fruits, nor to the thirst for fundamental certitude regarding that which touches the sum-total of our destiny, a thirst that

Science is as incapable of satisfying as of destroying. Man is greater than his Science.

Science, although splendid in its achievements, a great power, and worthy of all our acknowledgments, is, however, limited in its scope and cannot sustain this infinity called life. He who would live from what he knows, and provision his being with nothing but certitudes of the so-called positive order, would perish of inanition.

So long as Faith is confused with a body of doctrines regarded as complete, definitive in character, and asserting itself in the face of history or nature, there will be a sort of secession in the soul, an open war between things all of which are equally worthy of survival and equally indispensable.

What struggles, what suffering this confusion has brought, what ruins it has heaped up! For the believer there can result from such confusion only agitation and perpetual fear. To scientists Faith appears like a power of obstruction. Instead of a fruitful collaboration between different aspirations which should complement one another, we have two hostile powers seeking mutual destruction.

We must go on living. We cannot wait for problems to be resolved. Nor, for that matter, have we the right or the power to install humanity definitely in a fabric of beliefs henceforth exempt from revision, or in a scientific system.

The situation of the religious conservative is terrible. He has identified his salvation with a particular conception of the world.

The situation of the man who has resolved never again to go outside the limits of positive knowledge is equally terrible. There are among our contemporaries men who compass within one soul these two miseries.

THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES

SHALL a doubt on a mere point of doctrine—and how many just and legitimate doubts there are, inspired by reason and conscience, that it were not well to be rid of!—shall such a doubt suffice to cut a man off from his base of spiritual supplies? A discovery in the physical world, a question in authenticity of texts, settled against our belief—shall this have the power to compass the ruin in our soul of that which makes its strength, its support, its life?

Is it admissible that out of a retort in the laboratory should come the declaration that there is neither future nor hope for humanity? that an authentic parchment should be unearthed from a monastery in Asia, a papyrus from an Egyptian tomb, to sap at the root our ideas of the Gospels and the chief of their miracles, including facts in the life of Jesus hitherto unquestioned? Is it tolerable to think that through such an event, whatever its bearing and importance, humanity can be struck in a vital spot? No, we cannot admit such a state of affairs.

The sword of Damocles may be suspended over our heads in particular enterprises; but the Universe and the Destiny of Man do not hang by a thread which may break or hold.

Yet so long as the downfall of an article of belief may involve in its ruin the foundation on which we stand; so long as the setting of a star, however brilliant it may have been, however long its career, can bring with it for us eternal night, just so long do we live under the sword of Damocles.

Where is our Salvation? It is in Faith alone.

MIRACLES

Das Wunder ist das Glaubens liebstes Kind.—Goethe.

THE FRIEND: Miracles are like the flowers of the field, which, hay to the cattle, to the bee with his subtle organs are honey-cups. A marvellous story contains a soul's treasure which is appreciable alone to the soul that derives its living from it. A miracle ground under the mill-stone and cast into the crucible of ponderous verifications does not give up its divine secret. It remains a common fact or an absurd fiction.

At bottom the miracle is the affirmation of this truth: no situation lacks an issue. In spite of the bonds of fatality and the blind alleys of despair, there is always a way out. The Spirit here affirms its victory over the world.

—But has it actually happened? Is it possible?

THE FRIEND: Questions beside the purpose. Ask, rather, what is the meaning? Spurious miracles are recognized by this—they have no inner meaning.

NOBLE AND COMMONER

THE FRIEND: Nobility is descended from the people. That which is sacred, twice sacred, was at first laic and common.

If the nobility does not from generation to generation reinvigorate itself in the commonalty, it becomes anæmic and dies.

If the sanctuary does not reinvigorate itself at the source of laic and domestic life, it becomes transformed into a sacristy.

The sacristy is to the sanctuary what the extinguisher is to the sacred fire. I should not hesitate to say, Profane as a sacristan.

THE QUESTION

THE FRIEND: In reality the question of questions is this: *Is the Universe living or is it dead?* If the Universe is nothing but a great machine, then man feels himself the greater of the two by virtue of his thought. Alone awake in the universal night, he is seized upon by the awful anguish of wretches buried alive. Man sees, the universe is blind; man hears, the universe is deaf;

man thinks, the universe gravitates. How can the one be the child of the other? Nothing is so fatal and so exact as a machine. By what aberration of its law has it brought forth its opposite? If the universe is dead, man is inexplicable. He has no father. We are living in a state that is all miracle, or all incoherence, rather.

Then let us believe in a living world. Mind worketh at the bottom of things. This is not simply one more hypothesis; it is the one and only truth.

Why cry out against anthropomorphism? Why be disturbed at the assertion that our God is in our image? Is not all that passes through our thought reproduced in our image? You speak humanly of the cell, and not as a cell would speak of itself. You think humanly of God, not as God knows Himself to be. What else is possible? And is it a weakness? No, it is strength. Were you to try to think as though you were not men, but rocks, gases, molecules, you would fall to a level below yourself. Your universe would take on the awkward and artificial look that distinguishes the manikin from the living man. How pitiful it would be!

Then have the courage to be men and to think like men. How should we learn better than through ourselves and the infinite riches centred in us, to mount slowly back toward heaven whence we came? To believe in God is human. And the more our God is broadly, simply, sacredly human, the more will He be divine or the more will He approach at least the mysterious and tender Divinity who when He would speak to us borrows signs on a level with our understanding.

Toward the *Father!* It is all in that. Heap up powers, cluster majesties together, let the spirit gleam, set the infinite ajar — nothing is beautiful enough, nothing great enough. But all this is only the fringe of His mantle. Go to the very heart — there you will find the Father.

WHEN THOU THINKEST OF GOD

WHEN thou thinkest of God, be not disturbed by thy hemmed-in horizon, by the flaws in the mirror of thy soul which reflects Him. Above all, say to thyself that He is the great favorable Divinity, and think of Him only with tranquil spirit. For He

is only terrible to the wicked, or rather, to the evil which is in the wicked. Even His hatred of the evil is only His love for the evil-doer. The love of one's enemies is a love that man essays and God practises. If He hated one of His children, He would hate Himself.

THE QUEST FOR GOD

THE quest for God is the movement of the soul toward its source and toward the general soul.

All beings are nourished from the Universal Substance and borrow their living from it. The soul feeds upon an inner nutriment which, under various forms, is but the penetrating eternal and spiritual essence that pervades individual souls. To be cut off from one's source is the great calamity.

Happily there are ways without number, conscious and unconscious, in which man provisions himself. If we could discern in each soul the manner and processes of its nutritive function, we should see that through the strangest aberrations of conduct, the grossest superstitions, the most

fanatical practices, our souls, after all, are seeking the source of life.

As falling bodies seek the centre of the earth, as the plant in the cellar seeks the daylight, as the swallow seeks the south, and the electric-needle the pole, the creature seeks God invincibly, through the very nature of his spirit.

The aspiration for plenitude, union, and harmony, from out the midst of poverty, isolation, and chaos, is the consummate resultant to which in the end are reduced so many of those movements and strivings in which life expends itself.

PESSIMISM

ALL intellectual pessimism is a sign of the rupture of vital connections. Man becomes pessimistic when he has lost touch with the forces that sustain the world.

WHERE IS THE TRUTH?

THE truth by which man is nourished cannot belong exclusively to any one of the domains upon which he depends, or in these domains to any one province, or in these provinces to any one parish. We could

not be asked to live by thought, in a universe reduced to the proportions of a system of philosophy, of an exclusive religious doctrine, or of a conception of science. For all theories halt and all catechisms are one-eyed. And if we are led into natural science as a place of refuge, we only change prisons. What hardihood to attempt to make us thinking creatures, to make us live in a simply chemical and mechanical universe! We are in such a universe, on one side of its constitution; we know it, and suffer from the knowledge; and that is the proof that we are not of it. Those who are wholly of it, not perceiving the fact, do not suffer from it. They are at home.

No, however interesting the story of the rocks and the plants may be, it does not suffice to explain man to himself. The observation of apes and ants takes him farther, but there still remains a long way to the end.

If we did not know by our inner experience that the brain is the organ of thinking, we should still be ignorant of the fact. If the unswerving bent of our minds did not lead us to hold every man to a certain degree responsible for his actions, we should not yet have discovered that there

is good and evil. One cannot draw these notions out of a retort or lay them bare with a scalpel. To acquire knowledge on the subject of humanity we must address ourselves to her in the best of her children. The truth about us, about our aim, our duty, our destiny, is found in the conscience of the noblest of our brothers. From their ideal, from the common property of their thoughts, from the treasure-house of their deeds, comes the clearest light on our nature and our conduct. There, too, is for us the summing up, the synthesis, of all our information about the universe, the true focus of revelation.

CONVERGING RAYS

WE must not exclude from this focus a single element of light; we must forget no one; we must lose nothing. All human truths, from whatever domain they come, are convergent. In vain do their discoverers ignore one another; they are collaborators; in vain do they stigmatize one another; they belong to one brotherhood. Let us keep this fact before us; let us ventilate our souls with it that

we may drive out the close air, the narrow sectarianism, and that passion for putting our pathfinders into a rivalry which makes us lose the best fruits of their labors. All sorts of minds are necessary. But they remain truly beneficent only when the largeness of their conceptions permits them to co-operate. Isolated from the others, each is harmful and inadequate. The most it can do is to make us lose that balance which is the very condition of life.

THE UNIVERSE EXPLAINED?

THE FRIEND: The bird, in the mechanical conception of the world, is greater than the cage, man is greater than the world; the effect superior to the cause. Too much explanation destroys the charm, besides which it is pure illusion. To explain is to be above. We explain only what is inferior to us. To comprehend ourselves perfectly, together with our destiny, we should needs be able to gain a coign of vantage above ourselves. As if we could! If then out of elements at our command we build a theory of our own nature, the man we construct is our creature. Is

it astonishing if we despair of ourselves reduced to such proportions? Moreover, each time the mind shuts itself up in a system, our explanations arrive at the same end. Neither the philosophies nor the religions that explain avoid the shoal. The thing which we explain is beneath us. The spiritualist, the man of a creed, shut up in his doctrine, will perish there in the end. Air is wanting, space is wanting, light is wanting.

The universes built by the hand of man are card-houses. A few good shocks, and the world comes to an end!

—Would it then be better to forego the explanation? Is the thirst to understand pernicious? The torture in the thought of the infinite, the anguish of destiny—who then shall quench them? As for me, I rise up and lie down in their company, and every action, every thought, has them hidden in the background.

THE FRIEND: No one can hold in check what is fundamentally human. Therefore do not renounce making explanations and trying to account to your own satisfaction for what goes on within you and around you. But, at the same time, take account of your means no less than of your con-

ditions. Investigate, explain; it is good and salutary to do so. But to be contented with what you have found, to stop there, to deprive yourself of what others around you have encountered in other paths—this is evil. To make a copy and then think that one has created the original—there is the illusion. Our explanations are effort, not achievement; aspiration, not fulfilment. Their inferior character should never be lost sight of.—Then all is uncertainty, speculation: never anything definite, no thought but is erroneous.

THE FRIEND: Why, no; that would be scepticism of the worst kind. Every just thought is on the way to truth; every just explanation on the road to the solution. It is of such conceptions—like ourselves, capable of improvement—that we, also en route, have need. Life is perpetual evolution. But in the midst of this shedding of ideas, one point remains fixed: Faith. That point we shall never leave behind us. We could not live by sight alone. All our explanations suffer from insufficiency. No one of them alone could nourish us. It would not contain that element of the infinite which must enter as an essential part into all the nourishment of the soul. Faith con-

tributes this element; it gives credit to God. And surely it is not going too far to believe Him solvent. Here is what every man should strive to be: An ardent seeker, open to every dawning light; a believer strong in God.

HUMBLE AND FIRM

THERE is sufficient reason for the world as it exists; otherwise it would have crashed back into chaos. The equilibrium of life comes from an acquiescence in this law. At bottom every normal and well-balanced existence has unconsciously the weight of it as ballast. It harmonizes every destiny, and makes peace possible even in the breast of ignorance, if only it be admitted that Someone knows what we do not, and that the meaning and aim of our life, all unexperienced as they are by us, exist for Him "for whom are all things and through whom are all things." The slightest thing in creation should with study and thought appear to us as a little window open upon the incommensurable. We should see in it a sign of the profundity of things and the greatness of our own destiny; and

day by day we should conceive a higher and more reverential idea of all realities, even the humblest.

In a grain of sand, a drop of water, a ray of light, an electric spark, there are more things to be observed and comprehended than the mind of man can seize. But if we are unable to fathom what is inferior to us, how far must our powers of comprehension be inferior to our own personality? Man is greater than his capacity to understand. All those who pretend that they have seen to the bottom of things, mechanicians full of self-sufficiency, materialists or spiritualists, believers or atheists, in attempting to point out the wheel-work, have put their pretensions high above their power. They take their formulas for realities. Their affirmations, like their negations, are marked by a presumption to which reserve, even timidity, is preferable. Before the grandeur of these problems, modesty is not simply becoming, it is both salutary and strengthening. Assurance is not the equivalent of true confidence, and humility does not exclude firmness. A certain self-restraint is inherent in the mentality of very learned men as well as of believers at first hand. Contact with the source of things makes a man

discreet, and at the same time gives him confidence. There is no incredulity in establishing the fact that there are depths past our sounding, that there is space which does not answer to our measures. Human reason has its limits. They are found on all sides, in science as well as in belief, in the axiom as well as in the symbol. But reality has no limits. Shall we be wanting in respect to science, on the one hand, and to belief, on the other, if we acknowledge with sincerity that they both exist below the level of their object, and below it not by some infinitesimal fraction, but by a whole infinitude? Is there not rather a sign in it of perfect respect, and in this respect do we not find a new motive for courage?

The pretension of knowing everything, whether by observation or intuition, is at once irreverential and fatal. It gives a final solution to that which demands to be perpetually renewed, purified, broadened, and sanctified. It accustoms us to moving about in a fictitious creation where the life-giving contact with the inexhaustible source becomes rarer and rarer. The infinite riches of a reality whose foundation nobody has reached are more satisfying than those quite relative and

only apparent, of systems which have a reply for everything. It is a perpetual incentive for the searcher to feel that he has infinity before him, and a refreshment for the believer to perceive the truth in the words of the Prophet: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

A SUGGESTION

THE FRIEND: To end the matter, will you hear my advice regarding all these different fashions, laborious, ingenious, contradictory, earthy or sublime, of conceiving this world where we are? It is that each one shall put his mind to the problem, and exercise it thereon to the best of his ability; but that he shall not become a slave to it, or find in it a pretext for disturbing, molesting or persecuting his neighbor: above all, in hours of weariness, when all these systems have brought confusion to the mind, that he should have the courage to rise serenely above them.

Hast thou created the world? Art thou charged with its government, responsible for it?

No. Then calm thyself. Take an hour of respite.

It is fatiguing beyond all comparison to agitate these vast thoughts, to bear the movement of their gigantic masses across the soul, to plunge into the unknown and to explore space. And is there not a certain abuse and some delusion in the idea of the accomplishment of these titanic operations by beings of our stature? After all, who hinders you from laying down now and then the reins of universal government, and ceasing to think of everything at one time? What harm can come from demeaning yourself as if you were not overseer of the route of the suns? Will they rise a moment later for that? Let us learn to let alone those things which transcend us and confuse us; and not to talk of what we do not comprehend, not to justify God and offer Him our counsels.

These vast speculations are indeed one of the ornaments of the human mind; but it is also honorable to be occupied with what concerns us, to busy ourselves about what we understand, to quit the orbits of the stars and walk the path under our feet. Let us be, for a moment at least, if not always, men; let us accept ourselves as we are and

make the best use of ourselves that we can. Be it only as an experiment, and without renouncing the incommensurable, let us remain sometimes in our place and work at our trade. Let us return to ourselves and become children again. *Be faithful in little things; so Christ taught us.* How good it would be to sit down at His feet, when, crushed under the burden of cosmic orderings, exhausted with combining, reconciling, foreseeing, encompassing, we no longer know which way to turn! I see His calm regard, alight with divine confidence and pity for all our weariness; I see His kindly, quickening smile, and I seem to hear Him say to us: *Little children, let each one do his part. The Father filleth the world with His Presence, He knoweth all things and guideth all things aright. Do you have faith in Him, and love and serve your brethren.* This is the road which leads from our weakness to strength, from our shadow to light.

It would all be so simple, if we had not all, through an old-time aberration, been seized with the giddiness of grandeurs. Each one labors on a big scale, reforms society, rules empires, regents the world. Very few are occupied with their own affairs; such occupation is beneath them. Religious

people have these worrying anxieties like the rest. We are men. We belong to the family. We smack of the soil. Have you noticed with what lofty disdain certain people contemplate humble morality from the height of their dogmas? One is not more disdainful from mountain-peaks of the little folds in the valleys.

Surely they are right who labor to widen man's horizon. Every thought that gives us more air, more light and more room, is a messenger from the world above us, and no one will ever succeed in closing the rift through which we look up into the infinite. In vain you clip the wings of the soul; in vain you say to the spirit: so far shalt thou blow, and no farther! By instinct it penetrates the country of the Unknown and the Mysterious. But why transform into chains these intangible cords that bind us to the beyond? Why wander and stifle in regions whose air is too rare for us to breathe?

Through what delusion does man believe himself nearer to God when he has scaled several scaffoldings of dogma? Is the humble road of the heart too earthy? Concern to mend his ways, care of the house and of children, the serving of those who suffer, the scrupulous use of time and

strength—are these things without their grandeur? Leave to God the mysterious and the future, in order that you may apply yourself with energy to the clearly defined present duty. Is not this a surer method than to put off the practical tasks till the doubtful morrow when we are to know at last that of which we are now ignorant?

CONTRADICTIONS

WHEN there are contradictions between the legitimate aspirations of man's heart and the assertions of positive science, there must be some error. Hope and reality are made for accordance. A discouraging truth would be nonsense. The supreme reality, alone true, is an absolute plenitude that defies all hope and passes all conception. No wing is stout enough to reach its limit, for it has no limit. We come forth out of being, it flows round us and bears us up. In its infinite riches is that which can satisfy every true and just aspiration. No contradictions then should stay us or disturb us. The only conclusion to draw is this: either hope must find another route or reality another interpretation.

Sometimes both are desirable.

THE UNPREACHED GOSPEL

THE widest habitation offered to the soul, the spiritual country most comprehensive, is the Gospel. Its spirit is not antagonistic to any fundamentally human tendency. It offers a platform on which all the higher interests may meet, all forms of intelligence fraternize, all effort be bound together in a single aim. Alas ! What has been made of this habitation by short-sighted men, ready to cut knots and close questions, that they may break the ranks of their adversaries ? They have walled up the windows, barred the doors, strengthened the ramparts. They have transformed it into a prison-house for the mind, a citadel bristling and threatening, whence anathema is launched at those without. And from time to time some brother inside, who has ceased to think according to rule, is hurled over the wall.

As they have proceeded with the house, so have they with the Master.

Jesus declared himself to be the Son of Man. They have made of Him a party chief, or at least, even while preserving His divinity, a man like the rest, tenacious of His individuality, His name, His

ego, with all its privileges. Who then has understood that the Son of Man is neither to be compared with another nor to be put into any competition? For of all that has been great or holy throughout the ages, in no matter what contingent of humanity, He would have said: It is with Me and I am with it: nay, much more than this, it holds something of Me in it, and I am its very self.

Did He not make Himself one with the humble, with children, with the sick, the poor, prisoners? Who is this *Me* to whom is done all that one does to others, good or ill? Is He a private individual with private interests, the director of some association in rivalry with others? No, He is the Son of Man, and nothing human is foreign to Him.

When his fanatical adherents attack science, it is *He* whom they attack. When they persecute men in his name, it is *He* whom they persecute. When you disregard the humble and the simple, it is *He* whom you disregard. When you belittle the Prophets in order to add to His stature, when you decry the pagan sages to make greater His glory, it is *He* whom you belittle and decry and obscure. He never contended for the prize of holiness, or for that of wisdom, or for that of grandeur. Your

comparisons, your petty rivalries, your snatching of crowns from others to cast at His feet—all these things are odious and deserve the rebuke in the words, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

THE essence of the Christian faith is the assurance that the Invisible is made man.

The most perfect outcome of the Spirit's workings behind the veil of things sensible, is found by man in the conscience of man, animated by its breath and filled with its presence. Faith in the Nature-God is difficult. There is too great a distance between him and us. If he is gracious, gentle, reassuring to-day, to-morrow he is violent, a devastator, without bowels of compassion. His brutalities shock our conscience. We cannot be nourished from the rock. The formidable divinity of Nature, active in the mechanic forces of the world, offers man a stone when he asks for bread.

Nearer to us is the God interpreted in terms of humanity. God visits man in man's image. Justice,

holiness, tenderness, pardon—not the stars nor the plants nor the beasts and birds, nor any spectacle of creation, reveal to us these realities as does a human being inspired by the higher life. To him we might say: In thee my problems are resolved, my discords harmonized, the obscure passages of life, of history, of writings, interpreted. You render God, the world and myself veritably assimilable and nourishing to me.

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL

YEET in all this, nothing is essential except life and power. The words with which to speak, the formulas in which to enshrine these experiences, are rich and varied. Their office is to interpret the uninterpretable, to express with stammerings, the ineffable. Their true attitude is one of entire humility, I would almost say of self-effacement. They are never more effective than when they seem to wait, ready to fade out before the glory of that which they attempt to prefigure.

If the word, the doctrine, the belief is substituted for the living faith, they are usurpers.

Observe the life and teachings of Christ. He

never indoctrinated. He kindled hearts by His contact. His Gospel is not a body of doctrines which He imposes, and which He confides to the care of scribes jealous of the letter. It is a force of tenderness, light, courage, joy and peacefulness. It is life infinite and divine, beating in the heart of a man, vibrating in his voice, shining in his face. There the soul, troubled by the strangeness and contradictions of the world, seems to inhale a breath of its home; the eyes open wide, the heart dilates and hope is reborn. Under this beneficent influence old stains and old iniquities are blotted out as ice melts under spring sunshine. Even the passer-by, conscious of some breath of freedom in the air, says within himself: "God hath visited his people. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

GOOD TIDINGS

GOD loves thee, and the world is God's. In the final reckoning, all things should turn to good.

Poor humanity, lost, astray, worn with fatigue, burdened with faults and miseries, the Father speaks

to thee, He calls thee. Rise from thy dust. Lift thine eyes toward the heights.

Thou art a hope of God, therefore thou canst not perish. Thy destiny, begun in pain and tears, will end in immortal light. All thy sufferings will be forgotten in the glory which shall be manifested in thee. Believe this. Honor God in the thought that your affairs are His, and that no power, no misfortune, no crisis can wrest you from His hand, or hinder His plan of love from being realized for you. Search, toil, fight and sow; but fear not, neither be dismayed.

In the midst of your ignorance, find peace in the thought that God knows what escapes your knowledge. He does not ask you to come before Him with a correct explanation of the universe. He is not the Sphinx, proposing a riddle, devouring those who cannot solve it. Trust Him, give yourself up to Him.

YE BELIEVE IN GOD, BELIEVE ALSO
IN ME

THERE are those who believe in God and despair of man.

Not to believe in man, in life, in useful labor, in the effect of intelligence and conscience combined; to consider the earth a lost colony, an enterprise fallen through; not to believe in the triumph of justice, of brotherliness, of the Good under all its forms—this is the worst incredulity.

Incredulity does not consist in the inability to fix in one's head certain forms of doctrine or certain facts presented as historic. It consists in thinking that life is only a great, vain show, from which no good will ever be got, and whose end were well wished for.

We are here to do a work, to work with God.

*“We have for us that Someone whose great shadow
Passes from time to time before our vision,
Across the enormous wall of the abyss.”*

The honor of God is concerned in our affairs. In spite of the faults and errors of men, He is the responsible author of the world. Thus we cannot end in failure.

Our skiff, buffeted by every tempest, has better

guarantees than the famous general offered the frightened pilot when he said: "Thou bearest Cæsar and his fortunes."

Lift up your hearts! Shake out the sails to the winds of hope. Everything that encourages, strengthens, increases zeal and joy, is good, is true. Every cheering doctrine is a torch of life lighted at the altar fires of eternity.

Error is what discourages, burdens, darkens, makes man drop his arms and shrug his shoulders when he is confronted by the task life imposes on him.

We must have Faith. It is the greatest of our treasures, the root of life, the way of nourishment from the source of being. Nothing great, beautiful, enduring, nothing human, is done without faith.

Faith removes mountains. Belief itself is often a mountain to remove. Belief then should amend, purify itself and remain always the humble instrument of Faith.

Faith quickened and spread abroad through visible signs and transitory things, must in the end become independent of these. Born of certain conditions, she must rise above all conditions. So falls the protective shell when the bird is hatched.

GOD IN CHRIST

THE FRIEND: *The best there is in God is man.* A God not interpretable in terms of humanity, would not exist for us. He would be a being within Himself, too high and too remote. He must needs put Himself on our level and yet be above us by the measure of the infinite. Herein lies the mystery brought upon our horizon by the revelation in Jesus.

The God who looked at us through those eyes, touched us with that hand, called us by that voice, is greater than all the visible world. No force in Nature, no majesty terrible or smiling, no thunder of Sinai or serenity of Olympus, can be compared with Him.

But He is here, near to us. He suffers with us, weeps in our tears, and so that the grave may be less dark, He does not desert us even there. He beholds our life, grievous and sublime, and says of each stage—I too have part in it!

THE SON OF MAN

WHO then art thou?
I am the Son of Man. Every spotless virgin is my mother.

Each blow that strikes the innocent and the weak, mars my countenance. No tear, that I am not concerned in its shedding; no ray of sunshine but I rejoice in it.

I am in the gathering together of those who love one another, in the solitude of the forgotten.

I die with the just who are outraged and persecuted, and from their ashes I rise again. How many times have I not died in your ranks! With you have I been hung on gibbets, burned at stakes. But from all prisons I escape, from all tombs I come forth. I shall be with you even to the end of the world!

* * * * *

The eucharist symbolizes a sublime truth. So long as there shall remain a being lost, God will sacrifice Himself to save him. So long as men seek Him in darkness, He will be ready to come down to

them, to put on humanity, in order that He may transform their perishable life into life eternal.

* * * * *

Creation is not finished. *The best is yet to be brought forth.* Were it not so, interest in the great universal labor would fail, and the world would be crushed under the weight of its dead matter, like a "successful" man under the accumulation of his successes.

GOD MADE MAN

GOD becomes man in everything that sustains us, keeps us living and active, enlightens the soul, and strengthens the will. It is part of our duty to see that we neglect nothing of this near and humble revelation.

The long look of the soul into the beyond, is not possible at all times or with all men. Let us learn to look at that which lies along our path. What goes on there, is of the first importance. The little things also are great, infinitely great. Let us be faithful in what, with our narrow view, we deem little things. Nothing is profane. Filled with a great and sacred respect for all that lives, suffers, dies, we are in communion with the holy of holies.

As one may live in a material sanctuary with a soul empty of God, it is possible to move among things apparently without a sacred character and have the soul full of Him. If the wide horizons become shut in, if the curtain fall, if you are reduced to spiritual poverty, to dearth within, be faithful. If your eyes are closed so that you must grope your way, make your touch and your hearing serve you, as they serve the blind; be faithful. Use your misery as you would happiness. Use your poverty as you would riches, and keep your faith, your good confidence. Preserve your equanimity. It is not enough to believe in the God of rising suns, of astral lights, of the splendid radiation of the spirit from within. You must believe in the God of long nights, of evil days. In the most obscure by-way, may He meet thee and say: I am here.

THE REDEEMING SACRIFICE

ON the terrible night when this man came to me, I felt that he was ready to share my lot, and it gave me the courage to bear it myself.

THE FRIEND: Words offered to those who suf-

fer by those who do not, are vain words. They speak another language. They call across an abyss, and the voice sinks into the gulf. The virtue of consolation is given only to him who makes our lot his own, who is ready to take our burden upon himself. This is what you felt that night. You met in your own experience, one of the profound truths of life. In an hour of anguish, the power of redeeming sacrifice made itself known to you.

Humanity has been forever renewing this experience through the centuries. Isaiah so expresses it: "He hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows . . . and with his stripes we are healed." The cross of Calvary has become its symbol. The sight of Him "crucified through love," has given more courage to wounded hearts than the finest counsels of wisdom.

CADENTIA SIDERA

THREE are castes among dogmas, as among men. Some dogmas of many titles, but more brilliant than useful, have always filled the front of the scene, to the detriment of those modest and active ones rele-

gated to the background and the wings, after the fashion of Cinderella. These high and mighty lords, excommunicating and persecuting whosoever did not bow low enough before them, have practised hateful tyrannies. Meanwhile the others, unseen, were consoling the afflicted, righting wrongs, commanding only through kindness.

I am tired of watching the parade of useless pomps. Their stars, now descending to the horizon, do not excite my regret, and I dream in the twilight, looking forward to the dawn of proletarian dogmas.

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

THE FRIEND: Do not expect me to decry the value of man's hopes of the life beyond. They are among his most precious possessions. It is well to lift our faces from the dark furrows above which we are toiling for the future, toward this full accomplishment, when every wound shall be healed, every abyss filled. Woe to him who would close to man the opening in the blue upon eternal life. I would rather be a poor beast, and die to-night, than a man without eternal hope, with cycles of assured ex-

istence before me, cycles wherein the insupportable sense of my nothingness should sink always deeper into my being.

And yet, it is not in this firm expectation that the power of the Spirit consists. That has its own force, is sufficient in itself. There is a certain manner of conceiving the world, which shows us that all things have their compensation, and makes us participants in the divine plenitude.

If Paul was able to say, "For I could wish that I myself were anathema for my brethren's sake," he was under the sway of a spiritual idea higher than that of eternal happiness considered as a far-off good, anticipated in the future. To speak as he did, one must be inspired by this idea himself.

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The peace of the soul is the key to the world. Through it all things are ordered and disposed in their places. In it the painful problem of life resolves into harmony.

CREDO

I TRUST Thee, not to the third day, not to the Easter dawn, but to the end of time.

Thy day cometh; that sufficeth me.

It is my calm in unrest, my light in the dark, my consolation in distress and defeat.

I have been led to Thee by the flower of the fields, by the star of the skies, by the voice of the Prophets and of the Gospel, by the radiance from the obscurity of the humble, as from the brow of the Heroic and the Just.

But henceforth Thou hast no more need of witnesses, or of fresh proofs. It is on Thee alone that I believe, in Thee that I would have my assurance for Life, for Death, for Eternity.

THE END

